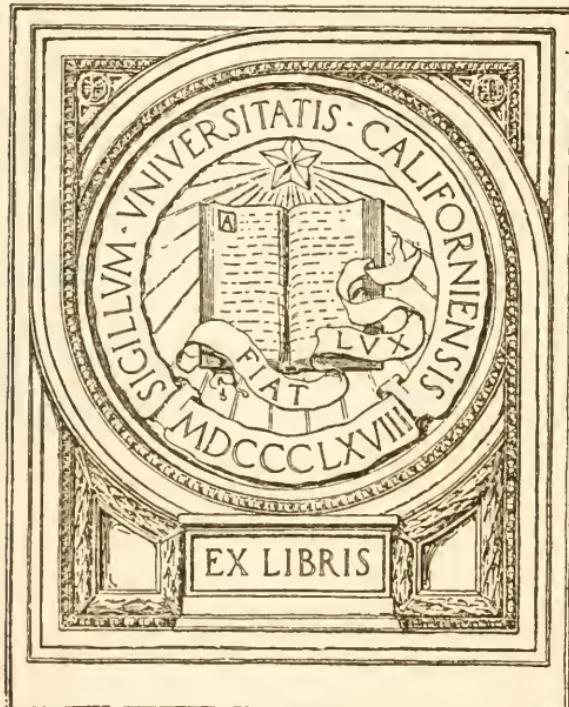


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ROBERT BURNS

AND

MRS. DUNLOP



MRS FRANCES ANNA DUNLOP.
From the Picture, Painted by G. W. M. Meissmann in 1787.

ROBERT BURNS
AND
MRS. DUNLOP

*CORRESPONDENCE NOW PUBLISHED IN FULL
FOR THE FIRST TIME*

WITH ELUCIDATIONS BY
WILLIAM WALLACE

EDITOR OF ROBERT CHAMBERS'S 'LIFE AND WORKS
OF ROBERT BURNS'

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOLUME II.

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Chronology of Letters

VOLUME TWO

B.—letters from Burns to Mrs. Dunlop. D.—letters from Mrs. Dunlop to Burns. *letters entirely new. —date unascertained. _____ letters missing.

B.	D.	B.	D.
1789.		1790.	
Oct. 2*.	Oct. 19.	Aug. 8.	Aug. 18.
Nov. 8*.	Nov. 25.	Oct. 6*.	Sep. 23.
—	Dec. 11, 24.	Nov. —.	Nov. 7.
Dec. 13.		Dec. 6*.	" 16.
1790.	Jan. 7. " 20.	Dec. 31; Jan. 1, '91.	
Jan. 25.	Feb. 16.	1791.	Jan. 28.
	March 4.	Feb. 7.	Feb. 13.
March —*.	April 6, 9.		March 26.
April 10.	" 23, 24.	April 11.	" 30.
	May 15.	May —.	April 6.
June 6*.	June 27.		" 30.
	July 1.		May 3.
July 9*.	" 22.		July 12.
" 30*.	Aug. 5.	Oct. 26*.	Aug. 27.
			Sep. 22.
			Oct. 26.

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B.	D.	B.	D.
1792.		1793.	
Jan. 14*.	Jan. 25.	Dec. 15.	
Feb. 3*.	April —.	„ 24.	
	May 4.	„ 25.	
	June 16.		
	July 17.		
	„ 26.		
Aug. 22.	Aug. 30.	1794.	
	Sep. 23.	March 13*.	Feb. 14.
Sep. 24.	———		March 21.
Oct. —.	———		———
Dec. 6.	Nov. 5.	May 12.	May 12.
	Dec. 30.	June 12.	June 12.
" 31. Jan. 2, '93.	———	June 25.	Sep. 8.
" 5, "	———	Sep. —*.	———
1793.	March 16.	Oct. 29*.	———
Spring*.	June 25.	Dec. 20.	———
June —*.	Aug. 6.	„ 29.	———
Aug. 25*.	Sep. 10.	Jan. 1, '95.	———
		„ 12, "	———
1795.		1796.	
	April —*.	Jan. 31.	Jan. 12.
	———	July 10.	

Correspondence

BETWEEN

Robert Burns and Mrs. Dunlop



THE following letter fills up the long gap in Burns's correspondence between his last of 6th September to Mrs. Dunlop and the "Whistle" letter of 16th October to Captain Riddel. It contains an earlier account of the origin of the ballad "The Five Carlins o' the South" than that sent to Graham in December, and this has of course not been before published in full. Captain Miller was returned in the election for the Dumfries Burghs to which the letter and ballad refer. It was he who in 1790 brought about the invitation from Perry of the *Morning Chronicle* to Burns to contribute to that journal.

*Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
Moreham Mains, near Haddington.*

ELLISLAND, 2nd October 1789.

I beg your pardon, dear Madam, for this coarse paper, but I have no other large enough for a letter to you. I have often said and thought that I had not time to write

the letters I wished, when in fact, it was only the procrastinating, enfeebling tyranny of Indolence: now that excuse is literally true. Five days in the week, or four at least, I must be on horseback, and very frequently ride thirty or forty miles ere I return; besides four different kinds of book-keeping to post every day. Still, Madam, be not afraid, as you are pleased to express so much satisfaction in my correspondence, that this additional hurry will in the least detach my heart from that friendship with which you have honored me, or even abridge my letters; though it must at times prevent the regularity of my answers to yours. I hold the epistles of a FRIEND to be the SACRAMENTS of Friendship. To deface or destroy the shortest Billet of yours would shock my feelings as glaring Sacrilege.

In this country we are just now Election-mad. Sir Jas. Johnston, the present Member for the Boroughs, has now opposite interests to the Great Man of this place, QUEENSBERRY.¹ His Grace is keenly attached to the Buff and blue Party: renegadoes and apostates are, you know, always keen. My Landlord's Son, a young Officer of twenty, is his Grace's creature, and is supported by the Foxites; Sir James, on the other hand, is backed by Ministerial influence. The Boroughs are much divided, and veer about with much uncertainty: the *weight* of the arguments of the several Candidates will determine their success. I tell you all this insignificant stuff to enable you to understand the following Ballad which I have just composed on the occasion. The Boroughs are Dumfries; Lochmaben, a small old town once the private residence of ROBT. BRUCE, and romantically situated among six or seven little lakes; Annan, Kircudbright and Sanquhar, near which is the old castle of the Crichtons.

THE FIVE CARLINS O' THE SOUTH—A SCOTCH
BALLAD²*Tune*—Chevy Chase.

I

There was five carlins in the South, old women
They fell upon a scheme,
To send a lad to LONDON TOWN
To bring them tidings hame.

2

Not only bring them tidings hame,
But do their errands there;
And aiblins gowd and honor baith possibly
Might be that laddie's share.

3

There was MAGGY BY THE BANKS O' NITH,
A Dame wi' pride eneugh;
And MARJORY O' THE MONY LOCHS,
A Carlin auld and teugh:

4

And blinkin' BESS OF ANNANDALE,
That dwelt near Solway-side;
And WHISKY JEAN that took her gill
In GALLOWAY sae wide:

5

And black JOAN FRAE CRIGHTON-PEEL,
O' gipsey kith and kin:
Five wighter Carlins were na found stouter
The SOUTH CUNTRIE within.

6

To send a lad to LONDON TOWN
They met upon a day;
And mony a knight and mony a laird
This errand fain wad gae.

7

O mony a knight and mony a laird
This errand fain wad gae:
But nae ane could their fancy please,
O ne'er a ane but tway.

8

The first ane was a BELTED KNIGHT,
Bred of a Border-band;
And he wad gae to London town
Might nae man him withstand.

9

And he wad do their errands weel,
And meikle he wad say;
And ilka ane about the COURT
Wad bid to him, gudeday!

IC

The neist cam' in a SODGER-YOUTH,
And spak' wi' modest grace;
And he wad gae to LONDON TOWN,
If sae their pleasure was.

11

He wad na hecht them courtly gifts,
Nor meikle speech pretend;
But he wad hecht AN HONEST HEART
Wad ne'er desert his Friend.

I 2

Now whom to chuse and whom refuse,
At strife thir Carlins fell;
For some had gentle folks to please,
And some wad please themsel.

I 3

Then out spak' mim-mou'd MEG o' NITH,
And she spak' up wi' pride,
And she wad send the SODGER YOUTH
Whatever might betide.

14

For the AULD GUDEMAN o' LONDON COURT the king
She did na care a pin ;
But she wad send this SODGER YOUTH
To greet his ELDEST SON.

15

Then slow raise MARJORY O' THE LOCHIS, Lochmaben
And wrinkled was her brow;
Her ancient weed was russet gray,
Her auld Scots heart was true.

16

The LONDON COURT set light by me,
I set as light by them:
The SODGER shall to LONDON gang,
To shat that COURT the same.

17

Then up sprang BESS OF ANNANDALE Annan
And swore a deadly aith,
Says, I will send the belted KNIGIIT
Spite o' you Carlins baith.

18

Your far-off fowls hae feathers fair,
And fools o' change are fain;
But I hae try'd this BORDER KNIGHT,
I'll try him yet again.

19

Then WHISKY JEAN spak' o'er her drink,
 Ye weel ken, kimmers a',
The AULD GUDEMAN o' LONDON COURT
 His back's been at the wa'.

20

And mony a friend that kissed his caup,
Is now a fremit wight;
But it's ne'er be sae wi' WHISKY JEAN,
We'll send the BORDER KNIGHT.

21

Says BLACK JOAN FRAE CRIGHTON-PEEL,
A Carlin stoor and grim,

The AULD GUDEMAN or the YOUNG GUDEMAN
For me may sink or swim.

Sanquhar
austere

22

For fools will prate o' right and wrang,
While knaves laugh in their sleeve;
But wha' blaws best the horn shall win,
I'll spier nae Courtier's leave.

23

So how this sturt and strife may end
There's naebodie can tell:
God grant the king, and ilka man,
May look weel to himsel'.

I daresay, Madam, you are by this, compleatly sick of Ballads; else I might send you a new edition, much enlarged and improved, of DOCTOR M'GILL'S BALLAD. That, with some verses which I made on Captn. Grose, may be the subject of such another Scots-mile Epistle.

Your little squalling Godson goes on "improving in grace and in favour with God and with man." Parental partiality apart, he is in fact and very deed almost the finest boy I ever saw, and seems to say, by the vigorous tossings of his little limbs and the open manliness of his infant brow, that he will one day stand on the legs of INDEPENDANCE and hold up the face of AN HONEST MAN.

I am happy to hear that your departed Bard is to get justice done him in his poetic remains. It was surely verging to borders of Ceremony, your asking my permission to subscribe my Name. Your goodness, my honored friend, I can only acknowledge — I can never repay it. Adieu! — *Le bon Dieu vous soulage et soutient!!!* ROBT. BURNS.

(1) A week or two after this Burns sent a copy of *The Whistle* to the Duke of Queensberry, the notorious “old Q.” (1725–1819), apostrophising him as “a nobleman of the first rank and the first taste.”

(2) There are considerable variations between the various MSS. of this ballad, of which four are known besides this one; the order of the stanzas also varies very much.

*Ad. Mr. ROBERT BURNS, Ellisland,
near Dumfries.*

MORHAME MAINS, 19th October 1789.

What dreadful weather for the farmer! Yet I hope you have not given up your farm, and trust, as it is in an early, dry country, you will not be ruined even by this year, which seems to bring all the plagues of Egypt on your brethren. What I see here and hear from Ayrshire makes me tremble for my country and my friends. Yet why must one fear fortune’s frowns for those who have never enjoyed her smiles? Poets are sure above or below the cares of this evil world; so I will flatter myself you stand safe amid the general wreck and private loss this deluge threatens. On Sunday was se’nnight I saw, about eleven or twelve at night, an appearance I never saw before—a halo round the moon, not hazy nor close about her orb, but while she shone clear and bright in the middle of the dark blue firmament, there was a wide, outstretched, radiant circle seemed to my eye to employ a space equal to a third of the heavens—the breadth of the ring about equal to the diameter of the planet, and its silver light nearly as luminous as her own. The part within its circuit was a darker azure than the surrounding sky, so that its contrast with the *Bright Queen* in

the center and the clear enclosure without was strikingly distinct and beautiful. Superstition says there must succeed forty days of rain; if so, thank God! fourteen of them are already past, during which, to be sure, the windows of Heaven has been opened, and I hope has discovered all your corn in the barn-yard, while here a great deal is still on foot, and still more springing a new crop in the field. Not the appearance in the sky was more unexpected to me than my own still appearing in East Lothian, but having asked a poor old Lieutenant with a broken leg to travel west with me, I waited for my chaise properly to convey him. Fate, which never seconds my benevolence, by the uncommonly severe harvest has prevented my son's sending for me; so I know not yet what I shall do with myself next fortnight, whether I shall remain here, go to Edr., or return home. Had Mrs. Dunlop been well this last week, I believe this would have been most probable, but she has been far otherwise, threatened with a complaint in her breast, alarming to a nurse, and attended with feverish symptoms which require my sick-nursing her with all the little skill I have. I hope Mrs. Burns has no such trouble with my little godson, of whom I am, and hope always to be, quite proud. I told Mr. Carfrae last day I was to give your name to Mr. Mylne's subscription. I cannot, however, allow you to honour him with the appellation of my Bard. Some of his things may be very well for an east country farmer, but to entitle them or their author to my peculiar approbation they must have borrowed the spirit of the west, the sentiments and fire in expressing them which some of my friends could lend without reducing their own stock to an ordinary standard, and I must have been able to read them with that degree of enthusiasm a patriot Bard

born in Ayrshire, and celebrating his and my native hero, could alone inspire. Besides, though I have been told poor Mylne was a very worthy man, I did not know him. He was not my friend, and my acquaintance with the writings of two men, whom I might naturally enough call my Dr. or my Bard, have taught me to feel the full force of whatever falls from the pen of a friend. We really esteem and believe our friends, because we feel ourselves really theirs, and truly flattered by their notice, which we almost come to persuade ourselves we deserve. The happiness that idea inspires adds point and animation to their every line, which not a sacred revelation delivered by another could possess in our estimation. This promised, don't suspect I should tire of anything you write, even were it possible it should be insipid in itself. Besides, I take some interest in Grose, and have great goodwill to M'Gill, whose book I don't perhaps find so much fault with as some others who have a greater taste for the mystical parts of religion. Its morality in this life and its immortality in the next go near to satisfy me, and allowing me that *bright reward* for which I have your poetical promise. I shall not quarrel about things beyond my comprehension and excentric from my wish or thoughts, one of which at this moment is to have a description of your farm and a plan of your house, that imagination may have a clue to follow your occupations as a husbandman at home and in the field ; for, as I have often told you, I cannot with the same sylvane or pastoral delight pursue my friend in his new capacity. My airy fancy is checked in her approach by both your company and occupation, and involuntarily flees back to that field where she can follow the plough, rescue the mouse, or pick up the daisy, and admire that native genius which, placed there,

has soared to heaven, and carries my soul along with it. Should I be doomed to lose every worldly prospect, and glean among the stooks [stacks of sheaves] for daily bread, I would read the Epistle to Davie, and find it sanctified and dignified the scene and situation. But sleeping or waking, I have never for one moment yet been able to figure the other to myself an Exciseman. I therefore sincerely wish he may be soon promoted, and meantime may continue tax-man [tacksman = lessee] of Ellisland in the world's eye as well as in mine.

With that bright glory inborn greatness brings,
And rich in fellowship of gold with kings ;
His civil-list ne'er need a grudged repair,
But prudence fill the coffers of his heir,
Then late bequeath to Wallace honour'd name,
Gay gilded trappings and high sounding fame
When he who dub'd him censor of mankind,
With mercy's sacred rod shall gauge his mind,
Translate the joys we 've tasted from his verse,
And make him happier than you can rehearse.

FINIS.

By the by, I had a very rural dream last night. I thought I was at a country fair, where a friend of mine begg'd me to buy them a fairing. I made choice of a beautiful beechen, turned bowl, and on taking it in my hand, found it engraven with this motto, of which I beg to have your opinion, if a dream is worth an opinion —

Love, health, and hymen, crown life's little cup;
May genius taste, while friendship fills it up.

Since I begin to rave in rhyme, I shall give you a few lines more in the cover, in hope you will return the compliment. It will no doubt be giving gold for I don't know

what — shall I say Congress notes? Yes, I will, for they went at last for all they were ever valued at, tho' perhaps in the present case that would still be *nothing*. The lines on the cover were wrot on seeing a sister of the late Lord ——,¹ who had never before appear'd since his death. There was to me something beyond words in her face, figure and expression. I dare not say what struck me; perhaps time may tell, yet I hope not. Is she not a sister of his, tho' ——? Should you write me soon, address to William Kerr, Esq., Secretary of the Post Office. He will know where to find me, and not grudge the trouble of taking care of one letter for your sincere friend and humble sert.,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

ON SEEING MISS G—

Gray was the morning of her life,
But black its after-day;
Though Heav'n itself beam'd in her eye,
It shot a humid ray.

Misfortune's bitter beating rain
Sore soiled her early show,
Virtue innate, indignant glow'd
Superior to woe.

Her noble birth and nobler mind
Are pourtray'd in her face,
May fate, like her, prove fair and kind,
And grant her ev'ning grace.

May future peace make her forget
The morning's cruel strife,
And wedlock's bondage bind her fast
To all the joys of life.

Late may she reach the sacred port
Of worth's eternal rest,
There find the friend that time last stole
Dear treasure of her breast.

I cannot send this to Kerr, for he knows how negligent I have been to himself and all my other correspondents since I came here, nor can I tell them, as I can do you, that I could not write — I was so busy sewing shirts to my son of a web his wife had made for him ; and let me boast my old eyes have served me to make six in one week, and were you to see the work you would own it better executed than any of the rhymes I send you. 'T is a shame to force you to pay eight — nay, I fear, tenpence or a shilling for so much nonsense ; yet I must keep measures with those with whom I have kept silence. Besides, you will have my letter a post sooner, by which I may possibly have time to receive an answer before I set out for home, if you write to Mr. Kerr's care very soon. Meanwhile, lest you should be angry at paying your beloved sovereign so dear for so worthless a packet, I have got three great men from Glasgow to pen the enclosed apology,² believing they could do it with more eloquent propriety than myself. I am sure to most people their style would be infinitely preferable to mine. Possibly you may have a worse taste. If so, God bless you with it, for it would certainly become my duty to endeavour to humour it as far as I cōuld. Farewell.

(1) Probably Charles, 12th Lord Gray, who died in 1786. He left six sisters.

(2) Enclosure apparently paper money, probably a £5 note.

Though he told Mr. Graham that he found the Excise business go a good deal smoother than he expected, Burns took badly with the overwhelming load of duties he had now assumed. He was over-fatigued, overworked, hurried and only by degrees reconciling himself to his new business. The following new letter to Mrs. Dunlop shows that the nervous break-down which fell upon him before November was out was preluded by a bad cold. Haste characterised most of his letters of this period, and he let few out of his hands without a complaint of the hurry in which he was involved, though he selected the correspondents to whom he confided his woes and sufferings, just as he selected those to whom he affected a lightness of heart which assuredly he did not feel. It was April before he was able to sit down and write his friend a leisurely letter of the kind she liked.

*Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
care of William Ker, Esq., Post Office, Edinburgh.*

ELLISLAND, 8th November¹ 1789.

If I were to write you, my dear honored Friend, in order to sport harmony of period or brilliancy of point, I could not chuse a more unfavorable moment than the present. I have somehow got a most violent cold ; and in the stupid, disagreeable predicament of a stuffed, aching head, and an unsound, sickly crasis, do I sit down to thank you for yours of the nineteenth of October, Prose, Verse, and whatever *else* was inclosed in it. God help a poor man ! for if he take a pecuniary favor from a friend with that acquiescence which is natural to Poverty at finding

so accommodating a thing, the poor devil is in the greatest danger of falling into an abjectness of soul equally incompatible with the independance of man and the dignity of Friendship ; on the other hand, should he bristle up his feelings in irritated Manhood, he runs every chance of degrading his magnanimity into an exceptionless pride, as different from true spirit as the vinegar acid of sour twopenny is from the racy smack of genuine October.

Your verses on Miss Gray are very pretty, but your motto on the beechen bowl is inimitably fine. You ask me to send you some Poetry in return : I shall send you a Song I made the other day, of which your opinion, as I am too much interested in the subject of it, to be a critic in the composition.

SONG

Thou lingering star, with lessening ray,
That lov'st to greet the early morn,
Again thou usher'st in the day
 My Mary from my soul was torn ;
O Mary ! dear, departed Shade !
 Where is thy place of blissful rest ?
Seest thou thy Lover lowly laid ?
 Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast ?

That sacred hour can I forget,
 Can I forget the hallow'd grove
Where by the winding Ayr we met,
 To live one day of Parting Love ?
Eternity can not efface
 Those records dear of transports past ;
Thy image at our last embrace,
 Ah, little thought we 't was our last !

Ayr gurgling kiss'd his pebbled shore,
 O'erhung with wild-woods, thickening, green ;
The fragrant birch and hawthorn hoar
 Twin'd amorous round the raptur'd scene ;

The flowers sprang wanton to be prest,
The birds sang love on every spray,
Till too, too soon the glowing west
Proclaim'd the speed of winged day.

Still o'er these scenes my mem'ry wakes,
And fondly broods with miser-care :
Time but th' impression stronger makes,
As streams their channels deeper wear.
My Mary, dear, departed Shade !
Where is thy place of blissful rest ?
Seest thou thy Lover lowly laid ?
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast ?

I have the honor to be, Madam, your obliged humble
servt., ROBT. BURNS.

(1) This date throws no light on the much debated time of composition of "To Mary in Heaven," but the letter confirms Jean Armour's statement to John M'Diarmid, that when it was written Burns was "labouring under cold." Note that the title of this MS. is "A Song."

Ad. Mr. ROBERT BURNS, Elliesland, Dumfries.

MORHAME, 25th Novbr. 1789.

[Franked by Kerr : Edinr., Twenty-seventh Novr. 1789.]

DR. BURNS, —

If my cares or my fears oppress me with pain,
Shall I torture my friends to hear me complain ?
No ! with poets on Pindus I 'll carelessly stray,
And grow cheerful by seeing them happy and gay
If to mourn like me they should ever incline,
The fire of their plaints draws the poison from mine.
There once was a Dr. my evils could cure,
For sorrow and pain fled the presence of Moore.
Now his parts or his fortunes have snatched him away
To London : where friendship oft cuts out of play.
Tho' his fame nor his talents I ne'er can o'ertake,
The taste he once formed must still float on his wake.

To Burns or to Little my thoughts be address,
The nymph and the swain by the Muses carest.
If fate has prov'd scanty in dealing their lot,
I pleased will remember that worth she's forgot.
To plough on a soil which the Muses have chose
Is renting a farm where one never can lose.
If my friendship one ray of pleasure impart,
'T is repaid by ten thousand that crowd to my heart.
Keen wit thaws the chill blood that clots round my soul,
And froze like those oceans that bind the South Pole.
To you I'll rehearse what for her I compose,
Since it paints the dear scene where I love to repose,
That scene of calm peace where I ever could stray,
Where Cullen allows yet one week of delay.

TO JENNY LITTLE AT LOUDON CASTLE

O blest with young Poesy's fair dawning day,
Come light my October's dull wintery gray;
Since for knowledge, Dr. Jenny, to you I repair,
Tell how Time wynds his jack in your kitchens of Air,
How my friends in the parlour drive winter along;
Come, cheer up his cold with the warmth of your song.
If Heaven's fair promise like yours don't prove vain,
And your pears at the window all drop with the rain,
The garlands of love, these spring flowers do not fade,
Poor Hymen grow cold and frostbit in your shade.
Here the tooth-ach makes Lydia drop the soft showers,
While without doors the torrent in hurricanes pours:
But our storms and diseases blow o'er in a blink,
Our sun and good humour beam bright in a clink.
O'er the ridges the corn is brought ratt'ling home,
And the crack of the guns tell the gentlemen roam.
With pheasant and partridge the board is replete,
With pride and with joy the young murd'rer elate.
The apples that fill in fine fritters are seen,
And those feast in the hall that don't sport on the green.
At eve, if our spirits should chance to fall low,
Revive with a sillabube under the cow.

Or if for variety any repine,
They may have honest whisky or generous wine.
Nor does night by our fears her anguish reveal,
We all can sleep sound, for we've nothing to steal.
Tho' our windows be low and our doors be unbarred,
By our dogs and our swine all intruders are scared.
Here tho' geese as at Rome be all gabbling round
More heroic than they we heed not the sound.
'T is ne'er dismal nor dark if our oyl be but good,
Lamps light us to sleep and the child to his food.
Harmless mirth at the heart and good cheer on the fork,
Our lives swim off thoughtless and light as their cork.
May the jack be perpetual, no change in the feof,
Still Lydia be happy in spite of her teeth.
From the heights of our wisdom oft Folly appears,
And wit grows no stronger by doubling our years.
To fortify happiness wrong we begin,
And by raising a wall oft shut a thief in.
With the weak eyes of foresight a rampart we trace
That entrenches a foe in the heart of the place.
With innocent glee let me lift to the song,
And cull a few friends from the best of the throng.
Jostle none from their road that on pleasure are bent,
But take with contentment what Heaven has sent.
For sake of the writer excuse this reply,
Remember the Muses' least scullion am I.

I expect to be in Edr. on my road home in a few days, from whence I shall send this, and long to hear you have thrown off all your complaints. I wish my rhymes could divert melancholy from your mind as yours has often done from mine. If they are weaker, I hope in God you don't need so strong a dose in youth as my latter years have required. But let me be thankful, since I am now easier than I could once ever have looked for, nor can I be ungrateful to you and your sister Coila, the sweetest of the Muses. Farewell.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

What strange creatures you men are ! One needs only to ask you to do it, and you will immediately stop from the very thing your heart prompted. You involuntarily repeated your “Epitaph on Poor Robert Muir,” but will not write it for me when I have asked it thrice. Indeed, I can hardly recollect one instance of your doing anything I ever bid you since I had the pleasure of seeing you first. Account for this if you can. I will punish you by not telling how I like your song, since my opinion of your writings is, if not flattering, at least partial. Adieu. Write me to Dunlop.

Ad. Mr. ROBERT BURNS, Ellisland, Dumfries.

LOUDOUN CASTLE, 11th Decbr. 1789.

[Franked by Kerr : Edinr., Thirtieth Decemr. 1789.]

DR. SIR,—I have been at home more than ten days, during which it has been no small down-draught on the pleasure I might have had in my return that I had not wrot you of my being come, so had no hope of hearing from you. I have oft repeated what I daily feel, that your letters are, I may say, my only foreign amusement, the only one for which my mind ever wanders beyond the limits of my own family, and where inclination, unprompted by duty, leads me in quest of something ever new, ever pleasing, ever rational, and where I have never been disappointed except by a letter being too long of coming. Even in that case, when I bethought myself from how much you must withdraw to write me, instead of blaming the delay, I felt a transport of gratitude and pleasure in considering that sacrifice of which you had found me worthy, or at least which you had had the good nature to make me amid domestic pleasures, domestic cares, the calls of necessary business and the avocations of taste or works of genius,

which crowd your hours and might naturally so oft exclude my claim ; were you not inimitably good to me, — a disinterested kindness for which I can never pretend to make the least return, unless by giving what it is not in one's power to withhold, an increase of esteem to that merit with which I thus became more and more acquainted. But while I am truly sensible of the value of your exertion in writing me, you will perhaps (if you have not been too much employed to miss me) be ready to alledge I have not followed your example, since you have now, I believe, enjoyed a longer respite than my pen has almost ever granted you since I first intruded on your retirement with the officious zeal of poetic admiration and the ambitious wish of drawing some partial notice, if by no other capacity, at least like the poor widow in Scripture, by my importunity. I have, like her, succeeded. You have been kind or polite enough to assure me you were the happier for my correspondence, and really wished its continuance, since which, like a true woman, I have been rather more remiss, at least not so anxiously, perhaps troublesomely, assiduous, lest you should escape my researches by change of place or plans of life that might prevent my ever being able to find or follow you ; or put you in mind there existed such an insignificant individual among the thousands that had borne testimony to future times of the present estimation in which you stood before our poor county was deprived of its most famed production by your being transplanted from your native soil and early friendships. Indeed, I feared once you would not have stopt short of London. This reconciles me to your present distance, and I am pleased and proud to say we are still inhabitants of the same Kingdom, and that is not an impossible, tho' perhaps a too sanguine hope, that

we may still sometimes meet now and then, before I make a farther remove than you have done, and try that great, irrevocable change which, come when it will, I trust will be more for the better than any you have to look for either from the farm or excise, but where I likewise trust you shall be able to ferret me out without all the trouble it cost me to find out what was become of you when you quitted Edr. and was not at Mossiel. I hope you will never be lost again either in this world or the next. You have many meaths [marks] now to point your path. Comets are tracked by the bright trail of departing glory for a little space, but it is quickly lost in air. Mrs. Burns by her charms and you by your love, I hope, have fixt one another in a more permanently durable shining state, and I trust little Wallace, or some of the rest of the brethren, may have in future reserve the happiness of perpetuating their father's fame and fortune, and rendering your name as famous on their own account as I am sure you would wish it from their merit or can make it by your own. I have been reading letters supposed of Saint-Evremond and Waller. The arguments of the poet are pure sophistry, yet, employed to reconcile an old man to banishment from his country and his friends, make me not only forgive but like the writer, who is breathing a sentiment I have ever abhorred. A citizen of the world is a term too thin and too broad for the basis of the human mind ; 't is like the fine fluid air fancyed to subsist beyond our atmosphere in that empyrean only fit to be inhabited by angels ; there they may respire ; but there its exalted purity would choke you or I, and leave us devoid of every sensibility useful to a lower sphere. In short, it is a language I never found pleasing, but in these letters attributed to the poet, and to which, perhaps for that

very reason, I am partial ; for I truly believe I shall never see any poet's letters in my life without remembering the many hours of pleasure I have derived from those of one who has been so good as address them to myself. These letters have likewise pointed out to me a comparative view, shall I say? of the French and English idiom, or of male and female writing, in the wonderful difference of modesty and delicacy of expression between the original and translation of the verses of the Duchess of Mazarin on her leaving the world. Is that difference characteristic of the nations or the sex? I rather think only the last, for though I should in theory look for most poetry in women, I have never yet seen what I thought a female poet. I am even writing this in the house with Jenny Little, spite of your testimony in her favours, nay, I am giving it as my serious unaltered opinion, spite of the compliment you paid my own two *inimitable* lines, of which I was so unutterably vain that I instantly vowed to have them inserted on a dram cup which should be consecrated to the discoverer of their merit as a reward due to so much penetration or so much partiality ; for I believe I should find the last full more flattering than even the first to my vanity. But seldom are my wishes or designs accomplished. An unforeseen accident came between me and my intention. The person was my friend. I used him as such. I turned the property vowed to his use to the gratification of the moment, preferred myself, and so became his debtor, which I dare say I may long remain before he distress me, or I forget his claim to those good wishes which will always live in my soul, and, should I grow rich enough, may perhaps still one day or other be engraven on a cup to grace his board, unlike enough to his capacious soul, but so much the fitter prototype of the

donor, whose fate it has been to give or take very little all her life. Meantime, may that *bon Dieu* to whom you recommend her grant contentment, and ordain it so that that little never may become less, and may ever flow in such channels as he approves and she can never repent.

Remember you are in my debt. I have your promise for lines on Capt. Grose. But can I not produce your written obligation to send me *all you write?* Believe me, I will never abuse the trust, and no mortal will receive it with more delight when you don't find it too inconvenient to keep your word. Your political piece diverted me much, and quite charmed Jenny. Your "Mary" again quite charmed me, especially the last verse. Every time I read it I just feel the very effect it so beautifully described and so forcibly illustrates; but oh! my good friend, I hope it is only a fancy piece for your sake. When I read it, I forget to ask for your cold; every other complaint seems carried off in the deepning channel of one overpowering stream of long-felt sorrow, which, however, I hope is only poetic. Providence is commonly kind enough to order these matters better in the real course of nature, and though there is no doubt moments when we fancy the channel deepened to an unfathomable abyss, the truth is that time and nature is constantly filling it up, and smoothing the banks to an easie, nay in some degree a pleasant ascent, where they are not undermined by some guilty working of remorse — a situation from which I am convinced the native probity of your heart has through life secured you. For, however delicate minds of strong sensibility may frequently create horrors to themselves from retrospective views of their life, 't is surely only for intentional guilt or injury the Great Judge will hold us accountable, or that we ought to

indulge the only necessary and wholesome probings of self-reproach — a feeling which, I flatter myself, the mind alive to benevolence, devotion, real patriotism and enthusiastic fondness for one's friends and family has no place for. This is the creed on which I rest, and this bids me hope for you and for myself too, that our woes, whatever they are or may be, shall dispel like a thunderstorm or the horrid mist I now sit in at Loudoun Castle, which, by the by, I think the dullest place in the world. There is a redundancy of vegetation here that arrests the air, and reminds me of the ennui of the rich and great, where over-abundance becomes more oppressive than want itself. The trees are encumbered with their leaves, and the fox-glove grows fourteen foot high. In consequence every monster of the mind starts to a like gigantic stature, disturbs the present moment, and terrifys one for the future. I dare not remember or look at my poor Anthony through such a medium, nor can I forget him except to dwell upon another bugbear which threatens *in terrorem*, and if it approach, will require all my fortitude or perhaps more than I possess. But since many a cloud passes harmless over our heads, let us not fear the distant thunder, but trust with confidence the hand that directs the tempest, and who has so oft showed benefits our friend by means we thought fraught with little kindness at the time of application. The very Post here does not go as I would have him; so that while I please myself in writing you, I know I cannot send my letter before I get to Dunlop, where I will beg your addressing your first leisure thoughts, and above all telling me you are well and happy, if truth permit you to say so. If not, throw off the gloom as I do just now; 't is sunshine to my soul to fancy worth and genius could find such a resource

in scribbling to me, as I do at this moment in believing you read my scrawls with the indulgence of a friend, and even have some impatient anxiety at this longer than ordinary delay of my telling you that, writing or silent, I am ever, with equal esteem and regard, Dr. Sir, your most obliged, humble sert.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

24th Decembr.

The most dreadful weather still keeps me here. May your Christmas be better than ours. I have been reading Falconer's *Shipwreck* — a new humiliation for the ladies. I beg you may compare the close of that poem with Charlotte Smith's Elegy, or with any female writing you ever saw, and glory you are a man. I fancy, while I weep over Arion, that I know him in real life. I figure also a Palemon to myself, but I would go twenty miles, if I had it in my power to do it with decency, to see William Falconer. Can you tell me is it he who is capt. of an East India ship? I shall rejoice to think it is. What a warmth of soul must he have originally possest when the ocean was not able to quench it! Perhaps, Burns, such may be one day my poor Arion. I trace the resemblance in a thousand instances, and am resolved to have the book as a sacred remembrance I may brood over in secret, if it is not already out of print. Do write me what you think of this volume. Is my estimation fantastical, or does your judgment second mine? I hope it does, for I resolve, if I can find the *Shipwreck*, it shall be placed close by your side on my shelf, at least for one month, my inseparable friend and companion. I will turn to it when the tempest howls, and pray for the poor wanderers of the wave with double hope and double fervor. How dreadful is the havoc of this week on the west coast!

My blood shudders to hear it, but still more to think how broad the wing of destruction may sweep, and what may await me from the east. Alas ! I think not of the chirping bird or owrie [shivering] cattle. Almighty God guard my friends !

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, 13th December 1789.

Many thanks, dear madam, for your sheet-full of rhymes. Though at present I am below the veriest prose, yet from you every thing pleases. I am groaning under the miseries of a diseased nervous system ; a system the state of all others the most essential to our happiness—or the most productive of our misery. For now near three weeks I have been so ill with a nervous headache, that I have been obliged to give up for a time my excise-books, being scarce able to lift my head, much less to ride once a week over ten muir parishes. Lord ! what is Man ? To-day, in the luxuriance of health, exulting in the enjoyment of existence ; in a few days, perhaps in a few hours, loaded with conscious painful being, counting the tardy pace of the lingering moments by the repercussions of anguish, and refusing or denied a comforter. Day follows night, and night comes after day, only to curse him with life which gives him no pleasure ; and yet the awful, dark termination of that life is a something — perhaps Nothing — at which he recoils with still more horror.

Tell us, ye dead ; will none of you in pity

Disclose the secret

What'st is you are and we must shortly be ?

"T is no matter :

A little time will make us learn'd as you are.

BLAIR'S *Grave*.

Can it be possible that, when I resign this frail, feverish being, I shall still find myself in conscious existence ! When the last gasp of agony has announced that I am no more to those that knew me and the few who loved me ; when the cold, stiffened, unconscious, ghastly corse is resigned into the earth, to be the prey of unsightly reptiles and to become in time a trodden clod, shall I yet be warm in life, seeing and seen, enjoying and enjoyed ? Ye venerable sages and holy flamens, is there probability in your many conjectures, any truth in your many stories of another world beyond death ; or are they all baseless visions and fabricated fables ? If there is another life, it must be only for the just, the benevolent, the amiable and the humane ; what a flattering idea, then, is a world to come ! Would to God I as firmly believed it, as I ardently wish it ! There I should meet an aged parent, now at rest from the many buffetings of an evil world against which he long and so bravely struggled. There I should meet the friend, the disinterested friend of my early life ; the man who rejoiced to see me, because he loved me and could serve me. Muir ! thy weaknesses were the aberrations of human nature, but thy heart glowed with everything generous, manly and noble ; and if ever emanation from the All-good Being animated a human form, it was thine ! There should I, with speechless agony of rapture, again recognise my lost, my ever dear Mary ! whose bosom was fraught with truth, honor, constancy, and love.

My Mary, dear departed shade !
Where is thy place of heavenly rest ?
See'st thou thy lover lowly laid ?
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast ?

Jesus Christ, thou amiablest of characters ! I trust thou art no impostor and that thy revelation of blissful scenes of

existence beyond death and the grave is not one of the many impositions which time after time have been palmed on credulous mankind. I trust that in thee “shall all the families of the earth be blessed,” by being yet connected together in a better world where every tie that bound heart to heart, in this state of existence, shall be, far beyond our present conceptions, more endearing.

I am a good deal inclined to think with those who maintain that what are called nervous affections are in fact diseases of the mind. I cannot reason, I cannot think ; and but to you, I would not venture to write anything above an order to a cobbler. You have felt too much of the ills of life not to sympathize with a diseased wretch who is impaired more than half of any faculties he possessed. Your goodness will excuse this distracted scrawl which the writer dare scarcely read, and which he would throw into the fire, were he able to write any thing better or indeed any thing at all.

I am glad you have put me on transcribing my departed friend’s epitaph. Transcribing saves me the trouble of thinking.

EPITAPH ON R. MUIR.

What man could esteem or what woman could love
Was he who lies under this sod ;
If such Thou refusest admission above,
Then whom wilt Thou favour, Good God ?

Rumour told me something of a son of yours who was returned from the East or West Indies. If you have gotten news from James or Anthony, it was cruel in you not to let me know ; as I promise you on the sincerity of a man who is weary of one world and anxious about another, that

scarce any thing could give me so much pleasure as to hear of any good thing befalling my honored friend.

If you have a minute's leisure, take up your pen in pity to *le pauvre misérable*.

R. B.

Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Ellisland,
near Dumfries.

DUNLOP, 7 Janry. 1790.

MY DEAR SIR,— I had wrote you a letter from Loudoun Castle, and, on getting yours, instantly dispatched it by Edr. a few days ago, so that I hope it is before this reached you. Could it be of any use to cheer your drooping spirits, and make bad health for a moment more supportable than you felt it the hour before, it would give me a degree of joy few things beside could do, as it would be some kind of return for the inexpressible debt I lie under to you for that relief I have so often experienced from your pen when I had not power to listen to the tongues of my best friends. When a sore heart and a deaf ear made me insensible to their kindest attentions, and I received their goodness with that disgusting coldness which freezes the most earnest exertions of human regards, it pleased Providence to send your Muse to my assistance. I found your book, and luckily was inspired with, not a transient curiosity, but something like an earnest wish to see or be of some use to the author, if in my power. Your then situation seemed not to preclude that hope. I flattered myself with the idea of being able to achieve a thousand impossibilities in your behalf, and although I soon became fully sensible of their unpracticability and my own incapacity to serve any body, yet I was at the same moment sensible of the full truth of your excellent axiom that, though we miss the wished for aim,

Yet while the busy means are ply'd,
They bring their own reward.

My mind was then in a state in which, had it long continued, my only refuge would inevitably have been a mad-house or a grave ; nothing interested or amused me ; all around me served to probe an wound whose recent stab was mortal to my peace, and had already ruined my health and benumbed my senses. The poignancy of your expression soothed my soul. It seemed suited to vent her own feelings ; she adopted a language unheard before, and which, although she was wholly unable to speak, was the only one she had pleasure in hearing used by another, and I had no wish for five months so predominate as that of seeing for the first time one who appeared to be as unhappy as myself. I had hardly made good this point when I heard you were believed just dying of the same fever I had immediately before had so much difficulty to struggle through myself. This rendered the poems and their writer yet more interesting than ever, and led me to write in a way which begun a correspondence you have since been good enough to encourage, and from which I have often drawn much pleasure, and, I must also confess, sometimes no small portion of pain. The melancholy strain of your last has even been able to throw a damp on the greatest joy could have entered my breast, the glad tydings of my dear Anton's being alive and well. I fear my mind is of an ungrateful, discontented cast, for certain it is I can be dissatisfied with thousands happy around me, but never truly happy while one person in whom I take a particular interest is greatly distrest. Amongst all the old rubbish that crowded my brains thirty or forty years ago (for now they retain nothing long) was some jewels like the relicks dug up round the Vatican

which are sometimes precious, such as those lines of Hutchinson¹ on witchcraft, which remain graven on my heart : —

Eternal King, is there an hour to make me greatly blest,
When I shall have it in my power to succour the distrest?
My heart alas! in vain o'erflows with useless tenderness.
Why should I feel another's woes, yet cannot make them less?
'T is not alas! reserved for me to ease the sighings of the poor,
Nor set the prisoner free.

How oft have I repeated these lines with the enthusiasm of hope, how oft taught them to my children instead of the Catechism? Now they are a corroding caustic eating away the substance like aquafortis etching copper, for the hope that sheathed my heart is gradually worn away like the beeswax that saves the plate from too wasting an impression. My power of being useful to those I love or esteem daily grows less; my consequence and interest in the world wears out as my years increase and my friends are removed from my side; even the pen which once soothed myself and pleased them, is torn by time from my trembling hand, and obscured from my thickening eye; nor can I long expect even to write a comforting scrawl to the person in the world I would wish most to please or serve. I see those I have admired, loved, and looked up to most laid in the dust, or brought by time or disease almost to my own level, and perhaps to drop before me. How dreadful were all this, could I not yet paint out to myself another and a fairer hope, a fresh landscape on the same plan, for benevolence alone can make us happy, either in practise or theory. I believe in the goodness of my God. I must and will also believe in the future existence of my own soul, and of others to whose goodness I shall still be indulged with the hope and endeavour of contributing, and as most con-

joined to the goodness of the Creator and the wishes of my own soul. I will also believe those renovated beings will retain the memory and form of former friendship, and that we may be allowed still to choose those we wish to help up the pleasant ascent of improving bliss and growing perfection. I have just got a letter from Mr. Moore on business, wrot so indistinctly, from a severe inflammation in his eyes, as hardly to be legible. He begs I would write, and wishes much to hear from you, and to have your particular sentiments of *Zeluco*, for, tho' its success has been great, he is, I believe, half ashamed of the infamous villany of his hero, and afraid his friends may not enough separate such a fiction from the mind which could form it. He says you or I may still address letters for him to his son at his house, Clifford Street, which will go safe, notwithstanding Jack is at the regt. in Ireland. Dr. Burns, the Doctor, and I, being of an age, get down hill together, and may perhaps together climb the farther side of the Ha-Ha we all must shortly cross. What if some of us may be allowed to look a little after the score of years or two you may lag behind us in the ordinary course of nature, to clear the bed of sickness, to improve the glow of imagination, or add harmony to the flowing line; that is, to amuse your mind, spread your fame, or add to your fortune? If Wallace is your theme, perhaps the awakening vanity of some of the name may induce them, if not to reward the poet, to gratify themselves by building up the decayed fabric of their ancestor's glory, and making the fortune of my poor little *Scanderbeg*,² who must one day represent his family, though never to enjoy that property sacrificed to irretrievable folly. Should it fail in this effect, still it were a subject worthy of yourself, and fit to stimulate every latent virtue

in the mind of your son. This hope would give warmth to your style and energy to your sentiments no other poet could possess. Think, if I was alive, how happy you would make your friend; if I was dead I should certainly come arrayed in immortal youth and beauty to visit your dreams, and inspire a brighter Vision, or bring a more *celestial garland* than ever you received from Coila. Does not the very idea revive your genius, and create an animating wish? Our lives have their ebbs and flows like the ocean. Your spirits will acquire a fuller spring-tide from their late depression, and your epithets bud forth with all the luxuriance of the approaching spring. I begin to be a little anxious about the last letter I sent you. I hope it has not missed its way. I would be very sorry, indeed, you thought me forgetful of so small, yet so flattering, a request, as that of hearing from me when you were ill and careless about the rest of the world. I shall be indeed uneasie if I don't hear from you soon, for my gloomy imagination will suggest that you are silent because not well enough to write, instead of believing the Scots Laureate is drinking in loyal inspiration for the New Year in healths to great George our King. Adieu. I shall drink and wish yours.

(1) Thomas Hutchinson, an Anglican clergyman (1698–1769), published several sermons and an essay on demoniacal possession.

(2) “Little Sandy Wallace.”

*Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Ellisland,
near Dumfries.*

DUNLOP, 20 Janry. 1790.

DR. BURNS,—Why do you not write me? Is it your fault or mine, or does the cruelty of fortune put it out of

your power? Are you become in so much worse health as not even to be able to tell me that is the case, or are you so ill as even to cease wishing I should know it? Were it not that I have lately seen your name to a publication in a newspaper¹ I should believe this was the cause of your silence, and be very unhappy in thinking so. This circumstance makes me hope other ways; yet, if you are got tolerably well, you are surely grown much worse to me than formerly, and that is by no means a pleasing discovery. Don't, I beg you, let me dwell too long upon it, lest I grow sick too at the idea of losing an acquisition I was both fond and proud of acquiring; a friendship which raised me in my own esteem, and of which I flattered myself I was ascertained for the remainder of my life. But perhaps you have gone some little jaunt for your recovery, perhaps are hurried making up your business, perhaps some other of your family ill or overtaken with some of those events of life which require your assisting sympathy. I am certain you have not neglected me so long without a cause. I hope I have not furnished it myself, but would be greatly relieved to know it was not sickness or something very distressing to yourself that had made you so long forget a friend who regards you so much, and is always so much pleased to hear of or from you. I wrot you from Loudoun Castle, and sent my letter the day after I came home by Edr. I also wrot since by Stewarton. I don't know what I said in either, since the impulse of the moment ever governs my pen when it is lifted to write you. Yet, as I was truly vexed at the complaining, melancholy state of your mind exprest in the strain of your former letter to myself, and much more so than I wished to say, perhaps these letters were not so natural as many I have wrote, and

might please you less on that account. But should you not reprehend me when I seem wrong, rather than give up your friends for unintentional errors? If ever I commit one where you are concerned, Heaven and my own conscience are witness it must be so. Remember the words of your last is a “sick man weary of one world, and anxious about another” — the picture you think me suited to contemplate for a month together in the person of one whose life is inestimable to so many and so valuable to myself. Indeed, I assure you it is; nor would I have made any human being, not the creature I like worst upon earth, so uneasie for any money could have been given me, as I have felt myself in not hearing from you since the last representation you gave me of your health and spirits. But if you don’t immediately answer this, I must remain persuaded you believe me either a Hottentot or a hypocrite, or that you are dead or dying, or seriously wish never to hear from me again; and, were I drowning, none of these are straws I would catch at. Do, then, present me some more comfortable hold, and quickly, for, like Cato, I am weary of conjecture. Farewell, my friend. God grant you may have only been drinking the King’s health or writing a New-Year-day ode. Don’t convert my cup,² which was meant a memorial of kindness, into a Lethean draught. Adieu. Write, I beg you, or make some body else write for you. I have heard of both James and Anthony, but my pleasures never come unmixt. FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Probably the “Prologue for Mr. George S. Sutherland,” which was printed on 14th January in the *St. James’s Chronicle and British Evening Post*, and possibly in the *Dumfries Journal*.

(2) Mrs. Dunlop had apparently had a cup made after the fashion of her dream (see *antea*, pp. 10, 14) and sent it to Burns. This was not of course the Wallace-cup, which was presented to the poet three years later.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, 25th January 1790.

It has been owing to unremitting hurry of business that I have not written you, Madam, long ere now. My health is greatly better, and I now begin once more to share in satisfaction and enjoyment with the rest of my fellow-creatures.

Many thanks, my much-esteemed friend, for your kind letters : only, why will you make me run the risk of being contemptible and mercenary in my own eyes? When I pique myself on my independent spirit, I hope it is neither poetic license nor poetic rant ; and I am so flattered with the honour you have done me, in making me your com-peer in friendship and friendly correspondence, that I cannot, without pain and a degree of mortification, be reminded of the real inequality between our situations.

Most sincerely do I rejoice with you, dear Madam, in the good news of Anthony. Not only your anxiety about his fate, but my own esteem for such a noble, warm-hearted, manly young fellow, in the little I had of his acquaintance, has interested me deeply in his fortunes.

Falconer, the unfortunate author of the *Shipwreck*, that glorious poem which you so much admire, is no more. After weathering the dreadful catastrophe he so feelingly describes in his poem, and after weathering many hard gales of fortune, he went to the bottom with the *Aurora* frigate ! I forget what part of Scotland had the honor of

giving him birth,¹ but he was the son of obscurity and misfortune. He was one of those daring adventurous spirits which Scotland beyond any other nation is remarkable for producing. Little does the fond mother think, as she hangs delighted over the sweet little leech at her bosom, where the poor fellow may hereafter wander and what may be his fate. I remember a stanza in an old Scottish ballad, which, notwithstanding its rude simplicity, speaks feelingly to the heart —

Little did my mother think,²
That day she cradled me,
What land I was to travel in,
Or what death I should die !

Old Scots songs are, you know, a favourite study and pursuit of mine, and now I am on that subject, allow me to give you two stanzas of another old simple ballad, which I am sure will please you. The catastrophe of the piece is a poor ruined female lamenting her fate. She concludes with the pathetic wish —

O that my father had ne'er on me smiled ;
O that my mother had ne'er to me sung !
O that my cradle had never been rock'd ;
But that I had died when I was young !

O that the grave it were my bed ;
My blankets were my winding sheet ;
The clocks and the worms my bedfellows a' ; beetles
And O sae sound as I would sleep !

I do not remember in all my reading to have met with any thing more truly the language of misery than the exclamation in the last line. Misery is like love : to speak its language truly, the author must have felt it.

I am every day expecting the doctor to give your little godson the smallpox.³ They are *rise* in the country, and I

tremble for his fate. By the way, I cannot help congratulating you on his looks and spirit. Every person who sees him acknowledges him to be the finest, handsomest child he has ever seen. I am myself delighted with the manly swell of his little chest and a certain miniature dignity in the carriage of his head, and the glance of his fine black eye, which promise the undaunted gallantry of an independent mind.

I thought to have sent you some rhymes, but time forbids. I promise you poetry, until you are tired of it, next time I have the honor of assuring you how truly I am, Dear madam, your obliged and humble servant, R. B.

(1) Falconer was son of a barber in the Netherbow of Edinburgh.

(2) "The Queen's Maries."

(3) The operation referred to was of course inoculation.

*Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Ellisland,
near Dumfries.*

DUNLOP, 16 Feb. 1790.

MY DR. SIR,— Since I had the favour of your last I have been very ill, tho' not very long so; yet it has been worse than a ladylike, lounging, lazy complaint, when nothing ails one; for I was forced, with however great reluctance, to call in the doctor, and get blooded; nor could even that set me to rights. For some days I had not even activity to write you, and thankfull you may be, since a sad scrawl you would have had of it, and on this big paper too—a large enough visitation in all conscience from an old woman when at the best but beyond poetic patience itself, had she been sick as well as grey-hair'd. Besides, you must pay for your torment too. No more

MS. A. 1. 36

writing gratis. I took the very last day of Kerr's being at Edr. to send you my last before he set off for London, where he may, for aught I know, remain some time, to the great hurt of my correspondence or of your purse; for yours is the only one he favours, and that from respect, I think, rather than love for your nine Mistresses. I don't remember if ever I introduced you to this friend of mine and benefactor of yours, for you are the only man in Scotland to whom he lends his connivance in cheating the Great G. R., and that from a disinterested veneration for your inspired profession, which he says ought to enjoy an universally acknowledged exemption from every oppression and a distinguishing superiority to which no other man ought to be held intituled. I don't positively know but he esteems you the more from seeing how often I write you, and did you know him as I do, you would think this no small advantage. Without the smallest shadow of those brilliant talents that commonly dazzle me, his soul, I truly think, is the purest and the best emanation ever sprang from that God whom he worships in spirit and in truth, and whose image he reveres and cherishes in its every form and fashion; foe to vice, but friend to man, he sees with the eye of benevolence and toleration every error but his own, if he has any, but really I think its own native goodness forever is dictating to his heart, "Be thou perfect, as thy Father which is in Heaven is perfect." He eagerly obeys the precept, is the guide and guardian of indigence and youth, the comforter of age and distress, and the shield of the oppressed. Nor does he arrogate the least merit from this, but in honest simplicity of virtue believes it were impossible to do less without being the worst of creatures alive, while in fact and deed he is the most exemplary of

human beings, at least the most I ever happened to see. Perhaps, Burns, you may leave such a son, for his father was behind no man in parts or worth, but no more resembled his son than that son does you. I wish I possest your talents that I might do justice to either; then my letter would not only deserve to be read by you, but to be wrote in characters of gold for the imitation of future generations. Old Kerr was an oddity that struck every eye that looked at him with wonder, but every mind that aalyzed him with esteem and affection. His son you may meet ten times, and never notice once; indeed I know you have already met and overlooked him more than once, but it will not be my fault should that happen again. So I for the present bid him adieu, and beg leave to ask for your little boy. It was singular one post brought me accounts of his birth and that of a boy my son John has named for me. The same post again informed me of the projected inoculation of both, and I have been on the anxious look-out to hear the success of each, yet without writing to inquire for either; so much has my own complaints engrost me. Yesterday I heard my little grandchild was reprieved till another season, since which I have felt as it were a double portion of your concern, which I hope is by this lost in joy and gladness over his safety, and that you are so just to my friendship as to have wrot me all your agitations on so interesting an occasion, certain of my sympathy with every turn of the tide an affectionate parent is subjected to during the vicissitudes of that cruel distemper. Besides, the honour of being godmother to that child is one I plume myself so much upon, that for my own sake as well as yours, I must be strongly interested in his fate. I feel a pride in the compliment you have paid me to which I am perhaps

but little intitled ; yet, if I did not or cannot deserve it, Wallace once did, and of that I shall for once be allowed to avail myself. So I beg you may never mortify me by repeating that disparity of situation without which I fear I should never have had it in my power to fix your attention so far as to be favoured with either your correspondence or the name of your son,— distinctions which, I assure you, I feel more flattering than any other I now possess. You say you are to send me rhymes ; send me what you will — the sentiments of your heart, the arguments of your head, or the overflowings of your fancy. The gifts of friendship are welcome in whatever shape, and 't is the priviledge of the poet to make them varied as the source from which they flow. Could you write a letter stupid as my own, while it was yours I would hug the treasure, and value myself on having a place in your remembrance when wit and harmony were forgotten, and you were in that solitary mood in which humankind naturally seek their God or their friend ; in that despondent gloom in which I have many and many a time wrot to you when I could not guide the pen elsewhere, and when I now wonder how I could have the presumption to lift it familiarly to a man whose superiority ought to have held me at an awfull distance, had not somehow or other the poet's flowery wreath hid the frown of wisdom and the deadly darts of wit, and sent forth some fascinating allurement that made me approach fearless those shafts that keep the world in awe. A lady told me lately she was thankfull she was at another side of the country ; she would not for the world have such a neighbour ; nothing within a score of miles could escape your ridicule ; was I not afraid ? “ No, madam,” said I, “ I should be conscious of never once wishing to provoke

it by insolence or contempt, and for the pleasure of his laughing with me should gladly take my chance of his laughing at me. Nor did I believe I should be the first he would attack with serious ill-nature, as I would strive to give no ground for that, and a good-humoured jest I would have no objection to join in, altho' at my own expense, from one who warmth of fancy should interest to hide his faults and beautify his merit." I suppose you know whence that quotation comes, but I blushed in reading the author's address to the Muses when he tells them they smiled upon Burns "a proof they were not averse to indelicate turns." You see to what those subject themselves who express their approbation of your works, when their delicacy falls under the unanswerable censure of such a judge. I confess I felt disagreeable, both on your account and my own, and it was not lessened when I heard the world informed that my friend, on getting a thousand pounds, had forgot himself and his former friends. I was so little pleased with the ace of hearts that I mistook it for the knave, and doubted your possessing that knowledge of mankind he says goes to make a poet. I wish, however, you had another thousand to see if you would forget me too, in which case I should probably blame you as much as he does, without being as good-natured as to conclude by an apology. I have had a visit of English and Americans, with whom I was pleased, and fell a-rhyming. I cannot send you the lines, as they contained some secret history I was not at liberty to betray, tho' I believe they are the first chimes I have penned since I wrot you first which were not submitted to your review, and I look on this as a kind of illicit trade I have been carrying on against your rights, while you are at the pains to read what I write. Farewell. FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

Do you know a Mr. Corbet in the excise? Could he be of any use to you in getting on? Pray, tell me. Adieu.

Ad. MR. ROBERT BURNS, Ellisland,
near Dumfries.

DUNLOP, 4th March 1790.

DR. BURNS,—Should a letter cost you a crown instead of a groat, I can no longer refuse myself the indulgence of writing you one in spite of your silence. I will not believe but what you are pleased to hear from me, though you grudge purchasing it at the price of one of those sheets the world and myself, as far as my weak power could go, have taught you to estimate at so high a rate that nothing I can ever have to give in exchange will have the smallest right to be regarded as an equivalent. Yet, my friend, while I say so myself, I can hardly afford a single wish that you should adopt the same sentiment. If you are happy and giddy, 't is but what a poet should be, and if in the delirium you have forgot me a while for the Muses, I can very readily forgive you on condition that you entertain me afterwards with an account of your travels. For ought I know the ascent of Helicon may be as amusing and instructive as that of Mont Blanc; or if you don't think so, you may intitle your work, as one of the French authors does his, and instead of the "Flights of Fancy," call it the "Wanderings of the Heart and Mind," make it serious and contemplative, and write it in prose. What a sweet little nosegay did you once make me of a hare-bell and a fox-glove, a hawthorn and the sensitive plant; at another time an enchanting concert of gray plover and Æolus's harp floating its softly-breathing notes over a more solemn shaded landscape than Claude Lorrain ever drew. There

is no pleasure the fine arts can give, at least that I have taste to receive, that I have not at times shared from your varied pen. Yet, believe me, the time I was most pleased was when you allowed, nay invited me for a moment to flatter myself that the writer of those diversified lucubrations actually felt himself the happier while he addrest them to me, and derived a sensation of gratitude in his superiour soul from the reflection that providence had cast the term of two minds as unequal in their pitch and different in their pursuits as his and mine within the same century, and in sight of each other, though placed at a long, immeasurable distance, which no effort of mine can diminish. Yet I'm sure I should have been a worse creature and a far more unhappy one at this day had I never known by your works that such a being as the Bard existed, and had I not felt the consoling vanity of believing my approbation, my admiration and warmest applause were not wholly beneath his notice, nor my professed friendship overlooked or received with mortifying contempt or indifference by one who appeared so worthy of universal esteem and intitled to choise his friends all the world over from every age, nation or situation, while that choise must in my opinion ennable those it fell on much more than the vain decorations of a green or blue ribbon. Now, in the fertility of self-tormenting ideas one presents itself; my heart trembles at the suggestion that perhaps you are at this moment in all the misery of parental anguish over your little boy, wanting yourself that consolation you would wish to be enabled to bestow on an afflicted mother, and in the moment of distress no longer promise yourself relief in writing me. Should this be the case, what a check to my presumptive pride! I will throw my

pen and paper in the fire, and never think of writing a friendly letter, or making a friend again as long as I live, for you will have convinced me the time is past, and that I have lost every talent to contribute to the ease of mind of those I most regard, in which case there is no human soul to whose kindness I could submit to be indebted, on whose duty I could endure to be a burthen, or from whom I would not beg of the Almighty to be removed before the cruel balance at our accompts fell so entirely on one side as to overwhelm me with unsufferable disgust at a life insipid to myself and insignificant to everything else. Indeed, I have had no very distant prospect of a release since I wrot you last. A rose fever came on with those symptoms that seem'd to bespeak an apoplexy. The Dr., alarmed, bled me twice in two days, and dozed me with medicines ; my face was much swelled and inflamed ; he pulled a tooth, as others had done eight before ; the fever relented ; the roses withered ; and I am once more pretty well, reading *Pensées de Montaigne*. By the bye, that is a manner of printing I detest ; I hope nobody will ever presume to garble a volume by publishing *Pensées de Burns*. 'Tis exposing one's faults commonly divested of all their beauties. I think I should feel it like hanging them in chains, yet I must transcribe two of his for your criticism. “*La Poésie est un amusement propre aux femmes; c'est un art folâtre et badin, plein de subtilité et d'artifice, tout en plaisirs et tout en montre comme elles.*” This is the one ; the other is : “*J'aime l'allure poétique à sauts et à gambades. C'est un art, comme dit Platon, léger, volage, démoniaque.*” You, who know it best, is this a proper definition of the most sublime of all human gifts? But I fancy neither Plato nor Montaigne were poets. For my part, I think 'tis, as

Pope says of virtue, the very wish to have it is more joy than the attainment of other blessings the world languishes after. How happy have I been tracing some rhyme which you were afterwards condemned to read, as a musician hears a child scratch on a sixpenny fiddle, but which perhaps rejoiced me as much in its composition as your finest writings ever did you. But won't you think this allegiance profanation, and do you not devoutly believe that the finer texture of brain fit to form the *Winter* dirge must also be imprest with sensations of delight unfancyed by us lower mortals? I am afraid they are endowed with keener sense of pain, while lighter minds breathe more freely in the thin air of pleasure. When I sat down I meant to send you some verses on the King by an English farmer, and an Ode to Hope by Jenny Little, but my own poor prose has overflowed all my paper, and I will not extend my tyranny so far as to tax you for other people, lest it should make you more averse to pay the mulct I put upon you for myself. Do you ever expect to have any spare time from tax-gathering and farming, or if you had, would you have any inclination to revisit this part of the world? I wish to God you were a Collector of the Customs or a Baron of the Exchequer, that I might see you as often and as easily as I could wish. 'Tis hard one of the idle, sauntering sons of Parnassus should be eternally clogged with business, but this is one of the inextricable mazes of fate, perhaps, like others, for the best. For me I dare say it is, as when such a change may come in the revolution of time and things, I have not the impudence to believe I should have a letter in a year, far less a visit in two, unless you were admitted to pay it in the regions above, where by that time I expect to hold my levee, at

which you will ever be a welcome guest, and contribute to the happiness of your entertainer; at least I hope such shall be the tenure of our future holding; otherwise I would give a small grassum¹ for even a perpetual tack [lease] where I had not an expectation of recognising and being recognised by those whose former intercourse had sweetened the past years of probation. Is this your creed? Or are you one of those who reckon such a supposition a sin? If it is, Lord forgive me, for I cannot so much as wish to retract. The hope of finding those I already have, and may still lose, is perhaps to me the highest of Jove's Heavens, at least in anticipation. Write me a long letter, or I will grudge that I have wrot you this, and be less troublesome for the future; and tell me how your child is. Should he be ill, you cannot imagine how your silence would hurt me. I have not left room even to say [in form your humble servt.,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Grassum = sum paid by a tenant to a landlord on entry upon a lease.

The following letter is of biographical interest for two reasons. It shows that Burns had conceived the plan of getting a foot-walk in the Excise considerably earlier than has hitherto been known; also that he aimed at a port-officership from the beginning, and at first had a preference for the Clyde—a wish of which nothing more is heard in the protracted negotiations which may be said to have begun at this date. The letter and subsequent ones on both sides prove, moreover, that Scott Douglas was wrong in assigning to October 1791 the letter from Burns to

Corbet which he was the first to publish. This editor fixed his date by the fact that the first mention of Corbet occurs in a Burns letter of November 1790. But here we have the poet and Mrs. Dunlop corresponding about Corbet in the spring of the same year. Obviously his letter to Corbet was written in the autumn of this year, after he had seen the one which the Supervisor-General sent to Mrs. Dunlop in response to one from her to either his wife or himself. See *postea*.

*Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
Dunlop House, Stewarton.*

[ELLISLAND, March 1790.]

Though I have just one hour and a half to do any thing for myself in (I have always laid down my watch by me, and shall scribble away, d——l take the hindmost) ; yet you see I have begun at the very top of my fool's cap page ; and how I shall fill the sheet, shall be, like many more important matters, left to time and chance. I never perused a friendly letter, not even from yourself, Madam, that gave me more pleasure than yours of the 4th inst., which I have just read. You talk of sending me a Poem on the King by an English farmer, and an Ode to Hope by J. L., but I would rather have such another sheet of your Prose, than a second Poem on Achilles by Homer, or an Ode on Love by Sappho.

You kindly lament the distance between us : that distance may soon be lessened. My farm is a ruinous bargain, and would ruin me to abide by it. The Excise, notwithstanding all my objections to it, pleases me tolerably well : it is indeed my sole dependance. At Martinmass 1791,

my rent rises £20 per Annum, and *then*, I am, on the maturest deliberation, determined to give it up; and still, even *then*, I shall think myself well quit, if I am no more than a hundred pounds out of pocket. So much for Farming! Would to God I had never engaged in it! I can have in the Excise-line what they call a foot-walk whenever I chuse; that is an appointment to a Division where I am under no necessity of keeping a horse. There is in every Sea-port town one or two Officers, called Port-Officers, whose income is at least seventy pounds per annum. I will petition Mr. Graham, and stretch all my interest to get one of these; and if possible on Clyde. Greenock and Port-Glasgow are both lucrative places in that way, and to them my views are bent. You formerly wrote me, if a Mr. Corbet in the Exise could be of use to me. If it is a Corbet who is what we call one of our General Supervisors, of which we have just two in Scotland, he can do every thing for me. Were he to interest himself properly for me, he could easily by Martinmass 1791 transport me to Port-Glasgow Port Division, which would be the ultimatum of my present Excise hopes. He is a Willm. Corbet, and has his home, I believe, somewhere about Stirling. One word more, and then to have done with this most ungracious subject; all this business of my farm, etc., is for your most private ear: it would be of considerable prejudice to me to have it known at present.

Your little Godson is quite recovered, and is if possible, more thriving than ever; but alas! one of the servants has introduced the measles into the house, and I shall be very uneasy till we get them over.

I have made a very considerable acquisition in the acquaintance of a Mr. Sutherland, Manager of a company of

Comedians at present in Dumfries. The following is a Prologue I made for his wife,¹ Mrs. Sutherland's benefit-night. You are to understand that he is getting a new Theatre built here, by subscription; and among his Subscribers are all the first Names in the country.

PROLOGUE FOR MRS. SUTHERLAND'S BENEFIT
NIGHT AT DUMFRIES,

MARCH 3RD, 1790

What needs this din about the town o' Lon'on,
How this new Play and that new sang is comin'?
Why is outlandish stuff sae meikle courted?
Does Nonsense mend, like Brandy, when imported?
Is there nae Poet, burning keen for fame,
Will bauldly try to gie us Plays at hame?
For Comedy abroad he need na toil,
A Knave and Fool are plants of every soil:
Nor need he stray as far as Rome or Greece,
To gather matter for a Serious Piece;
There's themes enow in Caledonian Story,
Might shew the Tragic Muse in a' her glory.
Is there no daring Bard will rise and tell,
How glorious Wallace stood, how hapless fell?
Where are the Muses fled that should produce
A Drama worthy of the name of Bruce?
How, on this Spot, he first unsheathe'd the sword
'Gainst mighty England and her guilty Lord;
And after many a bloody, deathless doing,
Wrench'd his dear Country from the jaws of Ruin!
Oh, for a Shakspear or an Otway scene,
To paint the lovely, hapless Scotish Queen!
Vain even th' omnipotence of Female Charms,
'Gainst headlong, ruthless, mad Rebellion's arms:
She fell, but fell with spirit truly Roman,
To glut that direst foe—a vengeful Woman!
A woman, tho' the phrase may seem uncivil,
As able—and as Wicked as the Devil!!!

As ye hae generous done, if a' the Land
 Would take their native Muses by the hand ;
 Not only hear, but patronise, befriend them,
 And where ye justly can commend, commend them ;
 And aiblins when they winna stand the test,
 Wink hard, and say, the folks hae done their best ;
 Would a' the Land do this, then I 'll be caution,
 Ye 'd soon hae Poets o' the Scottish nation,
 Would gar Fame blaw untill her trumpet crack,
 And warsle Time and lay him on his back.

perhaps
security
wrestle with

For us, and for our Stage, should ony spier,
 " Whase aught thaе chiel's make a' this bustle here ? "
 My best leg foremost, I 'll set up my brow,
 We have the honor to belong to you (bowing to the Audience) !
 And gratefu' still I trust ye 'll ever find us,
 For generous patronage and meikle kindness
 We 've got frae a' Professions, Setts, and Ranks :
 God help us — we 're but poor — ye 'se get but thanks !

ask
who owns,
[fellows

I hope this will find you quite recovered from that alarming disorder which, hostile to my happiness, threatened you so awefully. You will make me wish, as the Romans did of Augustus, that you had never been born, or had never died ; for should you leave this world before me, it will give my heart-strings such a wrench that nothing in my after-life shall restore them to their proper tone. I hope Madame Henri is quite well again, and that the Goodwife of Morham-mains, little ones, etc., are going on, encreasing in favor with God and with Man. I am still very hurried. In May or June I shall be in Ayrshire, and may have an opportunity *in propria persona* of assuring you how much I have the honor to be, your devd. hum. servt., ROET. BURNS.

(1) This confirms the inference drawn in the new *Chambers*, vol. iii. p. 151, from the letter of Burns to

Provost Staig, there first published, that this prologue was written for Mrs. Sutherland, and not, as editors have hitherto assumed, for her husband. The last two couplets were replaced in the final version by six, mainly different.

*Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Ellisland,
near Dumfries.*

DUNLOP, 6th April 1790.

DR. SIR,— You are perhaps by now accusing me of the grossest carelessness in not enquiring after your measles, but I am no worse than all the world; only more taken up with my own family and my own concerns than even with those of my best friends. I have for some days past had a bright circle, such as you celebrated on New Year's Day was a twelvemonths, when, the Sovereign being sick, you chose to act as my Laureate. All my young folks now in Scotland have been about me this last fortnight. From Lady Wallace to my son John's little boy, I have presided amid four generations, and beside some others (the children too of the children of my early friends) have had Monsieur Henri and the *Goodwife of Morhame*, which, by the by, although a title which I pronounce with peculiar pleasure from a consciousness of its justice, I appropriate the use of wholly to myself. To say this to the Farmer of Ellisland would savour of insolence; were I to address it to a presuming, forward Exciseman, it would flow with the gall of indignant reprehension, but, pointed to my friend, and to that poet whose delicate soul measures all distinctions, and subdivides the smallest fractions into which pride, propriety, or even folly can split a hair, I will with honest freedom say his borrowing the word hurt me, not for my own sake, but

for yours. Dr. Burns, you will easily enter into my feelings on this occasion. Were ever your little ones in the childish frolics of youth to throw down one of your principal fences, would you not esteem more than all others the noble, generous spirit of that neighbour who, before you could repair your hedge, drove his cattle to the extremities of his own field, far from your vexatious slap [gap]? But forgive me if here I have said too much. I never mean, believe me, that a thorn of mine should scratch your little finger. Were it to wound my friend, I would bathe the hurt with as sincere a tear as ever woman shed, and I trust the balsam would remove every sense of the pain from his breast which my friendly candour could occasion. Yet I could not consider it as fair to myself or you to hold my tongue, while I felt I should have blushed at the sound of the epithet had you applied it in company. Can there ever be a more forcible proof of the power of custom than one's blushing with offended pride at receiving the most honourable appellation female merit can possibly deserve? Yet, while we live in the world, we must sail in its stream, however unpleasant the voyage. I am glad to hear you say Corbet can do all you want, as I had once an intimate connection with his wife, which by accident I hope just now to renew so far as possibly may put it in my power to procure his interest without troubling your other friends. But I suppose it would not be proper to mention your plan, or at least your name, immediately, since you say you might suffer by having it known just now. Perhaps my hope of serving you may prove quite vain, like many with which we frequently flatter ourselves in life, and which always vex me most where my friends are concerned. For myself, I have now neither views nor wishes; yet future prospects and present perspec-

tives, too, affect me, sometimes extravagantly much, when those I love are included in the piece. I would be affectedly dead to vanity did I not tell you the sighs of the Muses were breathed over me when I was last ill in a very complimentary address from Jenny Little. As a proof of her penetration, the most touching lines told me your grief on that occasion and the general joy on my recovery. Here is my response :—

TO JENNY LITTLE

IN REPLY TO HERS ON MY BEING SICK AT SIXTY

A breeding sick Muse gaunting sore for a theme, yawning
May trick up a shadow and varnish a dream ;
Bid fancy just paint the first stick she can find,
Or dress some old witch in the charms of the mind.

Come then, my dr. Jenny, and hold down your head ;
I 'll bind it with joy — here 's the Queen of the Mead.
Thus crown'd when you meet and shake hands on our plains,
When strength, wit, and sweetness embellish your strains,
Yet satire may rend those just meeds of your prime,
But unenvy'd I 'll wear my wreath — of gray Time.

You see wit, like love, may be run to his last shift, since I am forced to conclude with an ill-spelt pun to comfort me under the consciousness of this poverty. Let me indulge in the pride of having your permission to call myself, Dear Sir, your sincere friend and obedient humble sert.,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

I was not aware that I had scrawled my fourth page, and Kerr is still absent ; so my heedlessness will cost a groat.

The best laid plans o' men and mice gang aft agley.

9th April.

I believe the devil is tethered at the back of my chair, for I think, if I know myself in the least, I am free to

answer I never had a favourite scheme in my life that had not for its aim the encrease of happiness to some one or other of my fellow creatures who at the time I thought well of, sometimes indeed without much good reason, but that was their fault, not mine, if they deceived me ; yet, when I was just rejoicing in the almost certain hope of success, how oft have I been disappointed by the most cross unforeseen accident, as I dread is the case at present. I have this very moment a letter from Mrs. Corbet,¹ in which she tells me her husband is soon to be taken from his present line to be appointed to a Collector's office. I am as crusty at the intelligence as ever the Old Gentleman himself was ; indeed, I defy even your poetical imagination to suggest a more scurvy trick of bad fortune than mine. Just when I had hunted out the very person able to do what I wanted, and saw, as I believed, the very moment when I could ask it with the strongest prospect of prevailing — at that instant for a clever, sensible, bustling man, who had been fighting up all his life, just to be seized with the whim of stepping a degree down from the station in which he could have effectually served my friend, and obliged me, is, to be sure, as tantalising a circumstance as ever one could be fretted with. I am only glad I had made no demand ; yet I will not give out ; so I will still endeavour to see how the land lies, and try if anything may yet be done before or after his purposed exchange. If I can make nothing of it, it will only be one proof more added to many I have met of the insignificancy of old women in general and myself in particular. I shall, however, be at my wit's end about this before you be in this country, and shall then be able to tell you all about it. Sorry I am that this is the point to which your views must be directed, and that you should think

your interests worsted by the prospect of a plan to which I really wished as much as lay in my power to attach you. Not even the prospect of your drawing so much nearer enables me to relinquish without infinite regret that respectability my ideas have ever attached to your present line of life. This is perhaps wholly a caprice, but it is one engrafted in my nature, and so deeply rooted as never to be eradized. I am, therefore, vex'd to find fate here run so counter to my inclinations. Indeed, everything goes cross with me to-day. I had taken by the hand a fair penitent whom I endeavoured to reclaim by every kind indulgence, and hoped I had succeeded, and placed her once more within the pale of credit and comfortable ease. I have just learned I was mistaken, and, believe me, it is a truly painful lesson. Besides this, we have had this forenoon an alarm of fire, which, tho' it has done no other mischief, has fluttered me a great deal. In short, I have wrot a vile letter, and ought perhaps to throw it in the fire instead of sending it to the post; but whatever I have said, I have certainly at some moment thought and address'd to you; it is therefore your property; you have a right to see it, and if any part displease you, commit it to the flames yourself, and forget but what I had done it before you received it. If you are not angry at me, write me how the children are, and if you still expect to be in Ayrshire soon, for I will not suppose it possible you can be there without seeing us here before you leave it again. Shall I understand your prologue as an engagement to furnish the theater with Scots pieces, or believe in that case it points to the order in which you would mean to introduce your subjects? But I am too near the end of my paper to ask a question and expect an answer, unless you use my letter like the witch's prayers,

and begin it at the bottom, for you can never bestow attention otherways to such a length as I have spun. Be thankful, however, it will not cost you above twopence a page, and that is surely not dear for any verse you take a concern in or furnish subject for. Farewell. The servant waits; so I have not time to glance over the contents, but it don't signify.

(1) Mrs. Dunlop only postponed for a little her letter to Supervisor-General Corbet or his wife. The result will be seen presently. It is almost incredible that Corbet should ever have contemplated descending from the rank of Supervisor-General to the post of Collector; probably Mrs. Dunlop misread her correspondent's letter.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, 10th April 1790.

I have just now, my ever-honored friend, enjoyed a very high luxury in reading a paper of the *Lounger*. You know my national prejudices. I had often read and admired the *Spectator*, *Adventurer*, *Rambler*, and *World*; but still with a certain regret that they were so thoroughly and entirely English. Alas! have I often said to myself, what are all the boasted advantages which my country reaps from the Union that can counterbalance the annihilation of her Independence and even her very name! I often repeat that couplet of my favourite poet, Goldsmith —

States of native liberty possest,
Tho' very poor, may yet be very blest.

Nothing can reconcile me to the common terms, "English ambassador, English court," etc. And I am out of all patience to see that equivocal character, Hastings, im-

peached by "the Commons of England." Tell me, my friend, is this weak prejudice? I believe in my conscience, such ideas as "my country; her independence; her honor; the illustrious names that mark the history of my native land," etc. I believe these, among your *men of the world*, men who in fact guide for the most part and govern our world, are looked on as so many modifications of wrong-headedness. They know the use of bawling out such terms, to rouse or lead THE RABBLE, but for their own private use, with almost all the *able statesmen* that ever existed, or now exist, when they talk of right and wrong, they only mean proper and improper; and their measure of conduct is not what they OUGHT, but what they DARE. For the truth of this I shall not ransack the history of nations, but appeal to one of the ablest judges of men, and himself one of the ablest men that ever lived—the celebrated Earl of Chesterfield. In fact, a man who could thoroughly control his vices whenever they interfered with his interests and could completely put on the appearance of every virtue as often as it suited his purpose is, on the Stanhopean plan, the *perfect man*: a man to lead nations. But are great abilities complete without a flaw and polished without a blemish, the standard of human excellence? This is certainly the staunch opinion of *men of the world*; but I call on honor, virtue, and worth to give the Stygian doctrine a loud negative! However, this must be allowed, that if you abstract from man the idea of an existence beyond the grave, then the true measure of human conduct is *proper* and *improper*: Virtue and vice, as dispositions of the heart, are, in that case, of scarcely the same import and value to the world at large, as harmony and discord in the modifications of sound; and a delicate sense of honor, like a nice ear for music,

though it may sometimes give the possessor an ecstasy unknown to the coarser organs of the herd, yet, considering the harsh gratings and inharmonic jars, in this ill-tuned state of being, it is odds but the individual would be as happy, and certainly would be as much respected by the true judges of society, as it would then stand, without either a good ear or a good heart.

You must know I have just met with the *Mirror* and *Lounger* for the first time, and I am quite in raptures with them; I should be glad to have your opinion of some of the papers. The one I have just read, *Lounger*, No. 61,¹ has cost me more honest tears than any thing I have read of a long time. Mackenzie has been called the Addison of the Scots, and, in my opinion, Addison would not be hurt at the comparison. If he has not Addison's exquisite humour, he as certainly outdoes him in the tender and the pathetic. His *Man of Feeling* (but I am not counsell-learned in the laws of criticism) I estimate as the first performance of the kind I ever saw. From what book, moral or even pious, will the susceptible young mind receive impressions more congenial to humanity and kindness, generosity and benevolence — in short, more of all that ennobles the soul to herself or endears her to others — than from the simple, affecting tale of poor Harley?

Still, with all my admiration of Mackenzie's writings, I do not know if they are the fittest reading for a young man who is about to set out, as the phrase is, to make his way into life. Do not you think, Madam, that among the few favored of Heaven in the structure of their minds (for such there certainly are) there may be a purity, a tenderness, a dignity, an elegance of soul, which are of no use, nay, in some degree absolutely disqualifying, for the truly impor-

tant business of making a man's way into life? If I am not much mistaken, my gallant young friend, Anthony, is very much under these disqualifications; and for the young females of a family I could mention, well may they excite parental solicitude, for I, a common acquaintance, or, as my vanity will have it, an humble friend, have often trembled for a turn of mind which may render them eminently happy—or peculiarly miserable!

I have been manufacturing some verses lately; but as I have got the most hurried season of excise business over, I hope to have more leisure to transcribe any thing that may show how much I have the honor to be, Madam, Yours, etc.

R. B.

(1) The paper is on attachments between masters and servants, and concludes with the story of Allan Banc.

From the date of the foregoing letter till the 14th of July is a blank in Burns biography; that is to say, between his writing to Mrs. Dunlop on the 10th of April and his writing to Dr. Moore on the 14th of July—a space of three months—there is no record of his doings, either in extant letters or elsewhere. The six letters which follow—two from the poet and four from Mrs. Dunlop—throw at least a little light into the darkness.

*Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Ellisland,
near Dumfries.*

DUNLOP, 23rd April 1790.

In the last miscellaneous epistle with which you favoured me you tell me, my Dr. Sir, you wish to have my opinion

of some of the papers of the *Mirror* and *Lounger* which you add you had just met for the first time and glory in as being wholly Scots. I had imagined a still nearer concern in them, having formerly regarded some of them as not only the produce of my country but of my friend. Many papers of the *Mirror* I had read with accumulated pleasure when, after your telling me they were the emanations of minds unknown to the world, and who had never before appeared in print, I fancied to myself I could trace the sentiments of my informer in different places of those volumes to which you now express partial favour, and for which, I am convinced, every thinking mind or feeling heart will be interested. As to the *Lounger* you are bound by gratitude for the kind share the author takes in your success and the ingenious apology he makes for a fault which I trust you run no risque of repeating (and which was the only one I have ever yet been able to detect in your writings) to do him at least ample justice. And I do think he needs no more to recommend him to a place in any lady's library who regards morality and her country, or whose character is formed by nature to those tendernesses and delicacies education and books are intended to inspire. I think I recollect and admire the particular paper to which you allude, yet I am not certain, nor have I the book to turn to. I am almost ashamed to say why I have not, but 't is the truth, so out it shall come. You shall behold me such as I am, with all my inconsistencies, faults and caprices about me, and then should you have, as you probably must, fourty years to live after I am dead, when you pick them out of my letters, they will perhaps console you for the loss of their owner, whose only remaining attribute, I fear, must be the sincere admiration with which she contemplates

genius and the perfect faith she has in the integrity and virtue of that heart over which she sees unbounded talents preside. Let this, dr. Burns, plead my excuse with you when I confess that I am the most miserable economist of my time and my money, so that I can hardly ever command as much of either as are equal even to those laudable calls which inclination prompts me to obey. The price of those volumes is often beyond my reach. It actually is so at this moment, nor, if I had them, can I absolutely say I would not squander time so far as not to read them, although the earnest wish to do it might withdraw my attention from the first duties of my life, which I would perform with listless langour while my heart was elsewhere. 'Tis thus I often do nothing because I wish to write to my friends ; yet I do not even that either, and sometimes when I do I had better have let it alone. Witness my last to you, which was a true outbursting of the spleen, for which I dare say you despise if not hate me. I am sure, if you do, I shall not presume to accuse you of injustice, but only wish I had been endowed with that worldly wisdom, often denied a woman, of holding my tongue when I was out of humour with myself and all around me, and not throwing away in a moment that esteem I had been long and assiduously endeavouring to acquire, and on which no mortal can set a truer value. Could you have seen me read your last kind, confidential letter, I should not need make this profession. You would then have known that, when other ladies take ether or peppermint drops, my soul knows no reviving cordial like the receipt of a letter from a friend who seems convinced he is addressing himself to one who is interested in him, and for whom he has value enough to wish sincerely she should continue so. Nothing ever flattered me more than

your considering me in that light. Give me, then, credit for that candour that would not cheat you out of your approbation, though I esteem it a treasure beyond my capacity to purchase at an equal price, and for which I can only repay you, as we do the Grace of God, with thankfullness. Yet, believe me, could I contribute in the very smallest degree to your happiness or the bettering of your situation by any effort of mine, it would give me infinite pleasure. I have been endeavouring to secure Corbet in your interest, and once more hope to succeed through the mediation of a very worthy friend of mine and unknown admirer of yours, who, I believe, has everything to say with him, and will be much in earnest to oblige me. I told him he could never do it more than by soliciting his friend in my behalf for such a place against such a time ; that I would not then name my man, but he was one known to the world and favoured by some of the Commissioners ; that his real character would discredit no recommendation, and his estimation amongst the worthiest part of mankind do honour to any one who should be of use to him ; that the favour done him I should consider as more than to myself. To this I do not expect any answere for a month, before which I hope I shall hear from you saying whether you approve what I have done or wish me to add anything else to what I have already suggested. I hope also to hear how you all are, to see the new born verses, and to know when I may have a chance of seeing their father. This last I must especially beg to know, lest I should be from home when you were so good as intend being our way, which would be a disappointment for which I would be inconsolable. Nay, I have even the vanity to fancy it would be some kind of one to yourself. Pray, if I am deceived, do

not take the trouble of informing me. Better I would not lose this illusion for the finest shall ever be produced by any tragic Muse, your own not excepted. Speaking of tragedy, do you know poor Jenny Little has cut her foot on a broken bottle, that it was feared she would be obliged to have it amputated, and, what was still worse, I, imagining it a trifle, laughed at her about it. Do you not pity me? I am sure I have pityed myself ever since I heard how ill the poor girl has been, and almost vowed never to laugh again — at least when I did not know what I was laughing at. But this, I suppose, is a vow you have too much sense ever to need making. I will look for your verses next time you write. I forget if I sent you some of mine to Jenny ending, I think, with a pun about old *Time*, to which let me (who entered on my sixtieth year some days ago) add,

Unsear'd by his scythe, your lines I 'll peruse,
And grow happy and hearty at sight of your Muse.

Adieu.

I don't yet hear of Kerr's return.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

24th.

My hand shakes. I have just witnessed a tragedy. Remorse acted the first part, for I am not certain it was not a feigned one; yet it was so much to the life, it harrowed up my very soul, and all nature exclaimed within me "Why, gracious God, is the sacred precept 'Forgive thy brother not seven, but seventy and seven times' not extended like-ways to the blamable, unfortunate sister who offends? Why does cruel custom constrain us to withdraw countenance, advice and support from those who want them most, the guilty, helpless and forlorn?" Such, however, is the tax propriety and decency sometimes demand, and which is

perhaps justly due to society, with whatever reluctance it may be paid by one who must act as the mistress of a family and the mother of grown-up daughters, the monitress of vice, as well as the encourager of virtue. How painfull the one and how pleasant the other part when it proves successful, how tantalizing when it does not, and the attempt subjects us to all the ridicule of folly and ill-nature, which I at this moment anticipate, but hardly stand in awe of—I am so much hurt by the disappointment of a laudable pleasure I had flattered myself with being entitled to enjoy at the expense of getting the laugh against me.

Ad. Mr. R. BURNS, Elliesland,
Dumfries.

[Franked by Kerr: Edinburgh, Seventeenth May 1790.]

I have just heard Kerr is come home, and, eager to embrace the advantage of this intelligence, fly to write you without minding the size of my paper. Were it a sheet large as your capacious soul, experience has already shewed you I might perhaps still find it unequal to contain all I would wish to huddle into it, or rather what my hand would just trace without the intervention of a thought or a wish about the matter. There is a confused fermentation often working in my mind when I lift the pen to a friend; I know not myself whether it is the cream or the scum that may cast up; chance alone must determine; 't is enough that choise points to whom the reverie shall be addrest. If to one I truly esteem, and to whom I flatter myself a scrawl from me, of whatever kind, is always welcome, farewell fear and hesitation, come reason or come rhyme, or be it neither, while I am blacking the paper, it is prolonging converse under the only circumstance that makes it forever interesting and agreeable. What are the pleasures of levity,

or of philosophy, of science, business or amusement, to those little, insignificant, trifling nothings, which one only says where they would always wish to be speaking or to be hearing, and which in reality are not worth ever being said at all were they unaccompanied with that unspeakable relisher which renders them more palatable than even the heavenly inspirations of the Muses. Tell me, my friend, with that honest sincerity I truly love, and which no man in the world has more the appearance of possessing, would you be most flattered by the eagerness that tore up a letter from you with anxious desire of reading a beautiful poem or an elegant essay, such as all the world knows you can write, or by that quiet silent pleasure which pocketed it up to be, like the hermit's repast, enjoyed alone, and, like his holy reliques, only sacred because it was yours? Can the pride of an author be thus satisfied when their composition becomes but a secondary recommendation of the productions of his pen? I hope so, for I confess 'tis thus I treat yours, and, independent of every other quality, invariably find the kindest, most friendly letters the very best you write me. For my own sake I hope you have a little of the same taste, conscious as I must be that, if mine are not valued on this account, a superiour mind, hourly conversant with its own ideas, must find it a tedious interruption to peruse them. Nor could it be an apology for breaking in upon you to tell myself they cost you nothing, tho' I assure you I find even that an encouragement, as you may guess by the haste with which I have seized the first day I knew of Mr. Kerr's return to set a scribbling, after having given you a longer respite than I had ever prevailed upon myself to do since you were first kind or polite enough to express pleasure in hearing from me — a pleasure, however, which female vanity

itself cannot magnify into a comparison of what I have in writing and being allowed to believe I am paying *you* an acceptable compliment in doing it. This is the circumstance of my present life that does most to reconcile me to myself. If misfortune overtakes me, or the neglect of others seems mortifying, and suggests a thought that I have lived too long, I instantly oppose to this the proud self-confidence of being able still to boast a distinguished share in the regard of the very man my age or country has produced whose correspondence and approbation could have promised me most pleasure. Yet don't think I enjoy this gratis. You know not the price it costs me ; the postage is really enormous, no less than the relish of my books and my friends, who lose much in the comparison. The works of one poet and the epistles of one friend pours a kind of insipidity over many who once could please, and my pen, redundant in trifling to one, forgets its duty to all the world besides. Even my dear Anthony complains of never hearing from me, and my carelessness re-echos from China, whence one ship has just imported six letters, in every one of which he repeats his never having got a single line from Britain since he crost the ocean. Yet this is not entirely my fault neither. I'm sure you would despise me if it were so. Tho' very blameable, you must not believe me so very bad. Poor fellow ! he is gone from Bombay, a mate, tho' with better hopes, and thinks he has found friends. God knows if he shall likeways find fortune. Her favours are as unstable and as blindly bestowed in India as in Europe. Some of my friends there have equally felt her smiles and frowns ; had to-day £50,000, to-morrow nothing. Should such be his lot, may all sovereign wisdom fit him for both situations, and render both preparatory to that great end for

which Almighty goodness created him — to be good and to be happy here or hereafter. I have been reading Neck-
er's *Religious Opinions*,¹ and I have done it with singular pleasure. They are the breathings of a mind at once great and good, the warm glow of philanthropy and that generous benevolence, which makes a man crowned with rank, wealth, and royal favour forget the indulgence of the few, and in the fervour of his soul espouse the cause of humanity, misery, and the many sons of oppression and distress who have no shelter from arrogant injustice but what hope points out for them in the bosom of their God. How feelingly he recommends faith and devotion to all stations, from the king to the beggar, and how loudly does he call every passion to his aid ! I am not enough metaphysician to determine if he speaks conviction to the head of man, but I am sure he employs that irresistible eloquence which sweeps all before it, and penetrates the inmost recesses of at least one woman's heart. I wish you would read him, dr. Burns, and tell me how you like the sentiments of the great financier. He does not write like a sectary, hardly like a Christian, but yet, while I read him, I like better my God, my neighbour, Monsieur Necker and myself. In short, I dislike nothing but the compliment he pays Mr. Pitt, whose character, I am afraid, is too cold to deserve it. He points out with rapture the sublime wonders of astronomy, as greatly suited to elevate the mind to the contemplation of the great Creator of the universe. I have in my life met about half a dozen of men, the greatness of whose talents and the goodness of whose hearts had a still more exalted effect upon my meditations than the study of the starry frame. Alas ! I must now look up to them beyond the firmament and all the bounds of nature and of time. No doubt such

still exist in the world, but not for me the eyes of my mind, as well as those of my head, are grown too dull to discover those who advance so far behind me. The years that wicked old fellow Time has mowed down serve to thatch an impenetrable screen betwixt me and the present generation, and indeed the noise and chatter they make gives me as little temptation as they can have to look through it. Still, let me thank Heaven for one consolation, since it is yet given me to know there still lives a poet who, had he been acquainted with my former friends, had he regarded them as I did with the same gratitude, esteem and tender affection, would have sung their requiem in strains capable of exalting my soul like the music of the spheres. Perhaps he may one day even deign to strike his harp, and pour the note of woe over my grave. I do not know if it would soothe the departed spirit, but sure I am the very idea that such a thing is possible chears greatly that spirit in her present abode. Nay, after all, dr. Burns, I would not wish an epitaph even of your composition on my tombstone, should vanity ever give me one, but to believe real grief would transcribe it on the heart of the poet is the sweetest gratification to my pride and the most enchanting illusion fancy is able to form. Remember, too, a late poetic expression of your own furnished a very pretty base for this airy structure; so you are not entitled to laugh at me for the supposition, however absurd it might appear to others. Poor Jenny Little has met an unfortunate accident, which once threatened the loss, if not of life, at least of a limb. I wish her absolute cure be yet a certain expectation, as I understand she still walks with much difficulty. I wish we were ascertained a little time would remove this. Health of body and serenity of mind are distinctions to which it will

be very hard if her character and talents cannot attain, since denied the more glaring advantages of life. I have been wandering, since I wrot you last, to the verge of our county to visit strangers (at Skelmorlie²), a thing I have not done for twenty years before. 'T is a charming place. The view of the water and hills in perspective is magnificent; the height on which it stands stupendous; the paths that wind through woods, rocks, and an infinite profusion of primroses and violets, are wildly romantic; the farms behind it seem by nature as well as by name to be "The back of the world," and the little improvements appear as if designed by the hand of love to hide him from that world on which he had turned his back. Its present mistress is a lovely American, whose manner of life, whether you consider her figure, her dress, person, or gentle, insinuating address, the elegance of her table, or the sweet, unassuming mildness of her character, strikes one with contracted or rather diminished beauty, resembling the delicacy, luster, and elegance of a fine miniature enamelled picture. Whenever I looked at her, I could not help thinking of American virtues and simplicity epitomized and sent across the Atlantic to gain British love and imitation. Her husband seems extremely fond of her, braves for her sake solitude, and renounces vanity with a degree of fortitude love alone knows to lend; nor do I know if even he can lend it long; yet I hope for the sake of both he can and will. They were at so much pains to make me happy that I most sincerely wish they may be every day more and more so themselves, and it would please me much to find my presence could now and then contribute to make them feel an encrease to the pleasures of their retreat. Perhaps, should I renew the compliment of visiting them again in the summer '92 I may

find myself rewarded by the familiar priviledge of introducing a friend who would taste and enhance the beauties of the place and the pleasures of the society, whose presence would to me at least throw double enjoyment on the gayest landscape nature could produce, and improve the most select party chance or even friendship herself could form. Should Fate and Corbet order matters as perhaps they may, and as I shall hope, if you wish it, till then, they will. Have I excited your curiosity so far that two years hence you would be willing to gratify it by bestowing the trouble of an extended walk of ten miles to see at the end of it Skelmorlie and your old friend, setting wholly aside any attraction a beautiful young American may have for a Scots married Bard, by then I suppose the father of half a dozen children, in each of whom paternal partiality may discover more charms than even she can display. Tho' Mr. Henri, who accompany'd me there, says she is the loveliest woman upon earth, my language is not quite so hyperbolical. 'T is only a little poetic *like yours*, but this comparison, I 'm afraid, is more of hyperbole than all he can say of Mrs. Harrison. Forgive it; accident dropt it from my pen, as it may do many words of which I feel not the force before, nor even always after they are wrote. This was too extravagantly conceited to escape correction or contempt; had I omitted the one you must have conferred the other.

It is long since I promised you a Ballad on the King. Here it is : —

I sing of George's golden days: not George the First or Second;
For they deserved the Nation's praise: with them this can't be
reckon'd.

For he above compare is known: God bless him, he so wise is,
That every day he mounts the throne, his wisdom higher rises.
Yankie doodle; who's the noodle; bonny Scotsmen boast him,

Every Tory, sing his glory, and in bumpers toast him.
The rebels over yonder main, they play the very devil,
They prime, they fire, they load again, with rifles most uncivil.
Who dare refuse a poultry tax, and swear he dare not cheat them,
Will all be glad to turn their backs when Mighty George can beat
them.

What tho' Britannia sees her sons, confounded and divided,
And by Monsieur and Spanish Dons, insulted and derided.
Tho' taxes rise and trade decays, and millions are expended,
On George with gratitude we gaze, by his right arm defended.
Then here's a health to George the Third, who heightens England's
glory,

If you will take a poet's word, or trust a loyal Tory.
Then halloo, boys, to George's name, and drink his health till mellow,
Old Time may travel till he's lame before he find his fellow.

So much for the spirit of the landed interest in England. I am pleased to see a little rising in the Chamber of Commerce of Scotland, and that they will at least speak for their bread if not for their beer, which they so tamely sacrificed last year. But, talking of kings, allow me just to add that I am as happy as a queen in the hope of your paying us a visit this summer. I hope no storm, as in former times, may prevent your kind intention; yet pray do write me when you think it may be, lest I should be from home; for I should regret much if what happens so seldom should fall again on so unfortunate a time as make me miss seeing you, when the distance leaves no prospect of making up the loss for heaven knows how long. The post calls loudly for this, nor, I daresay, can you even pretend now to be sorry that I am obliged to bid you adieu, tho' I assure you 'tis always with reluctance I write or pronounce farewell when address to you by, Dr. Sir, Your much obliged friend and obedient humble sert.,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

DUNLOP, 15th May 1790.

(1) *De l'Importance des opinions religieuses* (1788)
by Necker, the great French financier (1732-1804).

(2) The proprietor of Skelmorlie from 1783 was
Hugh Montgomerie, afterwards twelfth Earl of
Eglinton.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, 6th June 1790.

It is by no means impossible, my dear and much-honored Friend, but that you may see me, ere this reach you.¹ A particular and rather disagreeable business calls me to Ayrshire—disagreeable in every thing, but in that I hope it shall give me the pleasure of being at Dunlop and seeing you there. Believe me, Madam, Heaven has few pleasures with which I am acquainted, equal to what I shall have on the seventeenth curr. if not a day sooner, when I hope to assure you in person how much I have the honor to be, Madam, your obliged friend and humble servt.,

ROBT. BURNS.

P.S. — It is now near midnight, but I cannot resist the temptation my vanity, or, with respect to *you*, something perhaps more amiable than Vanity, yet not quite so disinterested as Friendship, puts in my way to make me transcribe the following Ballad for you—it was finished only this day. You know and, with me, pity the amiable but unfortunate Mary Queen of Scots. To you, and your young ladies, I particularly dedicate the following Scots Stanzas :—

QUEEN MARY'S LAMENT²

I

Now Nature hangs her mantle green
On every blooming tree;
And spreads her sheets o' daisies white
Out-o'er the grassy lea:

Now Phebus chears the chrystal streams,
And glads the azure skies;
But nought can glad the carefu' wight
That fast in durance lies.

2

Now laverocks wake the merry morn, larks
Aloft on dewy wing ;
The Merle in his noontide bower thrush
Makes woodland echoes ring :
The Mavis mild wi' mony a note
Sings drowsy day to rest :
In love and freedom they rejoice
Wi' care nor thrall opprest.

3

Now blooms the lily by the bank,
The primrose down the brae ;
The hawthorn 's budding in the glen,
And milk-white is the slae :
The meanest hind in fair Scotland
May rove thir sweets among, these
But I, the Queen of a' Scotland,
Maun lie in prison strong.

4

I was the Queen of bonie France,
Where happy I hae been ;
Fu' lightly rose I on the morn,
As blythe lay down at e'en :
And I 'm the Sovereign o' Scotland
And mony a traitor there ;
But here I lie in foreign bands
And never-ending care.

5

But as for thee, thou false womân,
My Sister and my fae,
Grim Vengeance yet shall whet a sword
That thro' thy soul shall gae :

The weeping blood in woman's breast
 Was never known to thee ;
 Nor th' balm that draps on wounds of woe
 Frae woman's pitying e'e.

6

My Son, my Son, may kinder Stars
 Upon thy fortune shine ;
 And may those pleasures gild thy reign,
 That ne'er would blink on mine !
 God keep thee frae thy Mother's faes,
 Or turn their hearts to thee !
 And where thou meet'st thy Mother's friend,
 Remember him for me !

7

O soon, to me, may Summer-suns
 Nae mair light up the morn :
 Nae mair, to me, the Autumn winds
 Wave o'er the yellow corn !
 And in the narrow house of Death
 Let Winter round me rave ;
 And the next flowers that deck the Spring,
 Bloom on my peaceful grave !

P.S. — the 2d. — The foregoing, tho' a shocking scrawl,³ is wonderfully well ; considering that I have both dined and supped with the gentleman who does me the honor to frank this letter.

- (1) Nothing is known of this projected journey.
- (2) Burns sent copies at later dates to Dr. Moore, Mrs. Graham of Fintry, Clarinda and Lady Winifred Maxwell Constable.
- (3) The MS. is excellent, only heavier in line than the poet's ordinary hand.

*Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, at Ellisland,
by Dumfries.*

LOUDOUN CASTLE, 27th June 1790.

What a difference between the day before one expects the visit of a friend they regard, and that after which they have bid them a long, perhaps an eternal adieu. How cruelly do I feel this, my friend ! How shall I write it ? The young, the lovely, the gentle amiable Henri¹ is no more. A fever of three days has laid him in the dust. The God of Mercy look down on and comfort his poor wife ! It was never till now I knew how I loved him, or how much he deserved it. Never did a more pure spirit inhabit the breast of man. Never was one more suited for those regions to which he has got so early, so unlooked-for a call. I am in the abode of misery. My eldest daughter has caught the malignant infection. How I feel for his father, and fear for myself in my girls. Poor Susan is some months gone with child. What a dreadful prospect lies before her ! O, do write me to Loudoun Castle by Kilmarnock. I can write nobody, not even you. How should I ? 'T is the dead hour of night, and I have just shut a letter to his father. My heart is dead within me at the idea of his reading it. 'T is for light sorrows women weep. I have not a tear to shed, but I gaunt [yawn] till I am ready to faint, and insensibility benumbs my very hand till it forgets to move. Farewell ! May Heaven long spare my friend, but may all your children survive you ! Still more, may such shocks as this never make me survive myself ! Ah ! how different were my feelings when I wrote you of his marriage ! Now, attending three sick rooms, I feel bodily fatigue is given by Heaven to relieve the mind. Poor Henri ! Thy body is at rest, and thy soul is in eternal bliss.

(1) Her son-in-law, husband of her daughter Susan, and the tenant of Loudoun Castle. The death occurred on 22nd June.

*Ad. MR. ROBT. BURNS, at Ellisland,
near Dumfries.*

LOUDOUN CASTLE, 1st July 1790.

Some body or other says, How vast a memory has love ! But O ! my friend, how infinite is the forgetfulness of sorrow. I cannot for my life recollect when it was I wrote you last. But what a scene has since passed over me ! What has one short week contained — health, happiness, sickness, death, and the grave, all the rapid succession again suspended over my trembling soul, still sick with unconquerable alarm and unremitting apprehension. Although the dreadful circumstances that produced it seem to abate their horrid force, my mind dare hardly credit its own relief. It will be a fortnight to-morrow since the period of that unfortunate fever which in three days (two of which passed over in unsuspected danger) carried off poor Henri, and then seized my eldest daughter, who never has been able to leave her bed since but for five minutes to witness the body of her beloved brother laid in the coffin. Her afflicted sister, unable to quit hers, lies in a distant apartment of this dismal castle, attended by those physicians whose aid she has seen so lately prove abortive, under whose hand has perished all her hopes. The day before yesterday, Nanny seeming to get a little better, as I accidentally sit by the writing-desk, my heart breathed forth and my hand traced the inclosed lines. This day poor Susan asked me if I ever wrot to Burns. Does this question, asked at such a time, say anything to the feeling heart of the poet ? Does my repeating

it suggest nothing to the still more exquisite sensibility of friendship? 'Tis but two days since I believed the horses would not be baited till the hearse that came from Ayr to convey the remains of poor Henri to the churchyard of Dunlop must return for another of my family. I got between the sick beds, wandering like a troubled ghost till, worn out with anguish and fatigue, I seek rest in complaining to my God and to the only friend not already overwhelmed with the sight of misery around me. But not even here am I satisfied with myself. Why afflict others because He has seen good to afflict me? Your friends, Mr. and Mrs. Lawrie,¹ have been very very kind indeed. I am grateful, but I cannot shew it as I ought. Farewell! Will you not write me? You are the only one I have asked or almost wished to do it. Direct here by Kilmarnock to your distrest friend.—Farewell.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) The Rev. George Lawrie, minister of Loudoun, who had introduced Burns's poems to the notice of Dr. Blacklock.

*Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
Loudon Castle, by Kilmarnock.*

ELLISLAND, 9th July 1790

I have this moment your two melancholy letters. Owing to the carelessness of my servant in not calling at the Post-Office, I had not received your first untill now. What answer shall I write you, Madam? What consolation shall I, or *can* I, offer to misfortunes so deep and heavy as yours! I am glad however to hear by your last, that Heaven seems inclined to spare you a daughter, though it has with such additional, heart-wringing circumstances deprived you of a son. Poor Mrs. Henri! May that BEING who supports all

Nature support her under the very heavy weight of her sorrows ; and endow her with extraordinary strength of mind, equal to her extraordinary trials !

Of Heaven's protection who can be
So confident, as utter this,
To-morrow I will spend in bliss !

What hidden trap-doors of disaster, what unseen arrows of misfortune, waylay and beset our paths of life ! And Heaven, as if to show its Omnipotence, often from the covert where Suspicion slept as having nothing to fear, looses the Shaft that wounds us to the very soul.

Thomson says finely —

Attach thee firmly to the virtuous deeds
And offices of life ; to life itself,
And all its transient joys, sit loose.

And yet, like many other fine sayings, it has, I fear, more of Philosophy than Human-nature in it. Poor David's pathetic cry of grief is much more the language of Man : “O Absalom ! My son ! My son !” A WORLD TO COME ! is the only genuine balm for an agonising heart, torn to pieces in the wrench of parting for ever (to mortal view) with friends, inmates of the bosom and dear to the soul ! The most cordial believers in a Future State have ever been the Unfortunate. This of itself ; if God is good, which is I think the most intuitive truth in Nature ; this very propensity to, and supreme happiness of, depending on a Life beyond Death and the Grave, is a very strong proof of the reality of its existence. Though I have no objection to what the Christian system tells us of another world ; yet I own I am partial to those proofs and ideas of it which we have wrought out of our own heads and hearts. The first has the demonstration of an authenticated story, the last

has the conviction of an intuitive truth. I have one favorite proof, because (though perhaps five thousand have done the same before me), I have discovered it in its native rock, at least hewn it into shape, myself. There are not any first principles or component parts of the Human-Mind, more truly radical than what is meant by, OUGHT, and, OUGHT NOT; which all Mankind (a most respectable Suffrage!) have, for several thousand years, agreed are synonymous terms with Virtue, Vice. But, except our Existence *here*, have a reference to an Existence *hereafter*, Virtue and Vice are words without a meaning. If *this scene* of Being is the whole of the *Drama*, then a man's individual self, his own pleasures and enjoyments, are and should be the whole of his care; and the true standard of his actions is, PROPER and IMPROPER. There may be a few that would still be influenced by what are called, Feelings of the heart; but by this new System, these said Feelings are only no better nor more respectable than so many *Constitutional Weaknesses*; and the true MAN of *SENSE* would be prudent in his Iniquity and wisely wicked. Should any object, the pleasure that would still be in the exercise of Generosity, etc., I answer, that further than such Generosity was useful in promoting your own private purposes, that said pleasure was and ought to be of no higher estimation and value than what is called An ear for Music: a little gratification of the organs of sense, but of no *real* importance in life.

There is sometimes a conjuncture of circumstances which looks like ominous. When I received your letters I was just finishing the following Stanza:—

Envy not the hidden treasure¹
Finer Feelings can bestow;
Chords that vibrate sweetest pleasure,
Thrill the deepest notes of woe.

I immediately and almost extempore added the following, too allusive to poor Mrs. Henri : —

Fairest Flower, behold the lily,
Blooming in the sunny ray ;
Let the blast sweep o'er the valley,
See it prostrate on the clay.

I have just got a summons to attend with my man-servants armed as well as we can, on Monday at one o'clock in the *morning* to escort Captn. Miller² from Dalswinton in to Dumfries to be a Candidate for our Boroughs which chuse their Member that day. The Duke of Queensberry and the Nithsdale Gentlemen who are almost all friends to the Duke's Candidate, the said Captn., are to raise all Nithsdale on the same errand. The Duke of Buccleugh's, Earl of Hopeton's people, in short, the Johnstons, Jardines, and all the Clans of Annandale, are to attend Sir James Johnstone, who is the other Candidate, on the same account. This is no exaggeration. On Thursday last, at chusing the Delegate for the boro' of Lochmaben, the Duke and Captn. Miller's friends led a strong party, among others, upwards of two hundred Colliers from Sanquhar Coal-works and Miners from Wanlock-head ; but when they appeared over a hill-top within half a mile of Lochmaben they found such a superiour host of Annandale warriors drawn out to dispute the Day, that without striking a stroke, they turned their backs and fled with all the precipitation the horrors of blood and murther could inspire. What will be the event, I know not. I shall go to please my Land-lord, and to see the Combustion ; but instead of trusting to the strength of Man, I shall trust to the heels of my horse, which are among the best in Nithsdale. As our Royal Scottish Poet says —

He suld been swift that gat him³
Thro' speed that day.

The lad that takes my letter to town, is waiting with impatience. I beg, Madam, most fervently to hear by the first post of your family, and particularly of your own health which I hear must have suffered exceedingly. God send good news from Loudon Castle ! ROBT. BURNS.

(1) See *infra*, p. 86.

(2) Captain Miller was returned. According to the *Caledonian Mercury* of 15th July the election took place on the 12th. "The number of people assembled at Dumfries was beyond anything ever seen at that place, but no disturbance happened."

(3) He suld bene swift that gat him
Throw speid

At Christ's Kirk of the Grene that day.

Christ's Kirk of the Grene. Canto 17.

*Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Ellisland,
near Dumfries.*

LOUDOUN CASTLE, 22nd¹ July 1790.
It is here your letters will still find me. Do write.

DR. BURNS,—I cannot give a stronger picture of my own situation at present than is presented in my being under the absolute necessity of postponing writing when you do me the honour to make it your earnest request I should let you hear of me. Don't take umbrage at the phrase, for, spite of the way in which it is in use of being prostituted, I declare upon soul and conscience I regard it as a singular honour and happiness, nay one of those upon which I have ever valued myself most, that *you* think my health or me worth being interested in or preferring a warm request to be informed about. When worldly advan-

tages forsake and worldly disappointments distress me, when Heaven deprives me of friends I love, and sees fit to wring my heart with the afflictions of those that remain, 't is to the attachment of a very few and the interiour conviction I feel of the worth and sincerity of those few that my mind is driven to seek its last hold of existence, and there alone it finds something to make that existence sufferable. How comfortable the soothing concern of a friend who can awake us from apathy and discontent, and point us back to our duties in this world, or exalt our ideas to another and a better, or even guide them to the Great Giver of all our good and evil, can teach us still to love and adore Him, and acknowledge wisdom in His terrors as well as benevolence in His tenderest mercy; in every affliction He provides us some consolation, and often sends it in a shape we could never have fancied, nor can the world recognise. Do I not at this moment experience this sacred truth, when my time is passed in witnessing the pangs of disease or the heart-rending sigh of unutterable anguish; when I dare not breathe the sensations that almost smother life or sensibility in my own breast for fear of adding to the misery of those around me; when among all my acquaintances some are too much and some too little concerned in my concerns for me to dare introduce them where they would be overwhelming or obtrusive? Has not Heaven made one whose ways of thinking blend contrarieties as distant from one another as his soul is from his situation, as fate seemed to have placed me from his knowledge or acquaintance — has it not compounded that mind so as mine shall find pleasure in addressing it, given me to discover its worth, and to hail as a friend in the decline of life and amid the bitterest storms of fortune

one with whose notice I durst not have flattered myself I should have been distinguished in the meridian of my days? Nor can I still guess on what claim to found my pretensions for that kind, warm interest you are so good as take in me and mine, and in which I feel more comfort than I can possibly express, not only in what you say to me, but in that ease with which I feel myself encouraged to say whatever my mind prompts, and to indulge myself in believing you will read it with the sensibility of a poet and the sympathy of a friend. Yet what have I to return but unavailing gratitude, or that esteem which stupidity alone could withhold for kindness which no self-partiality can lead me to think I merit, and which disappointed efforts have frequently shewed me? I shall never be able to give any proof of my thankfulness for but by presenting you now and then with my correspondence. Nay, even that at the moment you are good enough to ask it as a favour I am withheld from complying with by the ten thousand nameless trifles that are required about the sick and afflicted, and a short time hence the total failure of my eyes will preclude altogether what those now interrupt. Nanny's recovery is slower than anything I ever saw, so much so I sometimes rather fear she is getting worse. Yet upon the whole she is stronger. Susan has never yet been able to leave her room, or walk without assistance, and 't was but two days ago she was so faint and looked so ill that I was called by Lady Wallace from the far end of the house to come quick lest I should not see her alive; and although this was only the alarm of an anxious over-fond old woman, who was at the time really ill herself, you may judge how much it disconcerted me when I found her really so languid I could hardly distinguish whether she

was fainting or falling asleep, or actually just dying. However, don't be uneasy about me, for although my mind is at moments quite worn out, my health receives no shock. One past has, I believe, made it impervious to a thousand that might succeed. Yet I was wounded in the most sensible part by an apprehension my son Andrew had been ill alone at home. Thank God! I have been spared that trial, for indeed there I am still quite vulnerable, and the feeling is very self-interested. Without him I fear I could perform no one duty on earth. God forbid I ever be tryed! Poor Henri would be nothing to that; yet Henri was what is seldom found in man.

O Henri! as it run thy life still tends,
Thy aim forever was to bless thy friends—
Those heart-struck friends that crowd around thy bier,
Transfixt in grief too poignant for a tear.
Ah! now I see the bitter torrents flow,
Nature's kind antidote for killing woe;
Thus once where Mara's bitter waters run,
God struck the stroak exalts a favour'd son;
Recoiling Nature sudder'd from the shock,
And burst the briny sluices of the rock.

Your friend Mr. Lawrie in a sermon has marked the character of this amiable young man in a manner greatly soothing even to his wife, who begged a copy to send to his afflicted father. Alas! what is man when such remembrances may be to-morrow all that remains of him that was dearest to our love. Yet such, drawn by the pen of genius and the heart of a friendship, our affections clasp to with inconceivable ardour, and draw something from them of talismanic force to sustain the overpowered spirit which reason or even religion itself can hardly support. O my friend! how I sometimes envy those powers you so fully

possess. Were they mine I should often be able to pour balm on the wounded heart. As it is, the faint shadow which the superior excellence of some of your works more than anything else has left upon my mind often intervenes between my own heart and its most cutting sorrows, and the attempting to throw a thought into measure wears the sharpness off it when more rational means fail, especially as the rhyme reminds me of and generally is addressed to that friend whose example set the machine at work, and whose singular partiality is perhaps the mainspring which alone keeps it going. Farewell! I have been a hundred times called before I could make out what I have not leisure to read over, but that don't signify. You will read the woman in it, however incoherently exprest, and to you 't is always the first thought, uncorrected and unrevised, in which I do, I am sure, as I would be done by. Your last made me look the prints, and I wish you joy of your bloodless victory. How differently are we employed! You swallowing the drunken libations of riot, and I dispensing bark and port to the trembling nerves of languid weakness and disease. Yet I envy you not in this. Long may you be pleased and happy, even when I'm otherwise. Farewell!

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Kerr, who franked this letter, appended the following note: — “Mrs. Dunlop writes that this letter had lain in her pocket for some time. I only received it to-day — 28th July.”

*Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
Loudon Castle.*

ELLISLAND, 30th July 1790.

Ten minutes ago I had no idea, my dear honored Friend, that your distresses could be of comfort to me, which, odd

as it may sound, they have just now been. I had transcribed off for you the inclosed Elegy¹ on a much-valued acquaintance of mine, which I thought might perhaps amuse you a little ; and was just set down to write you by this conveyance which is my wife and your little God-son going to Ayrshire to see their friends, when a servant of mine brought me from town, your letter, and one from London acquainting me with the death of a brother² of mine, who was there a journeyman Saddler. He was just twenty-three, a fine, worthy, young fellow ; and while my bosom laboured with the anguish consequent on the distressing intelligence. Poor Mrs. Henri ! said I to myself ; and lifted up my heart in gratitude that I was not called to bear such a load of woe as hers.

I am not collected enough to write you a letter. I am happy however that Miss Dunlop is getting better, and particularly that you are not likely to suffer so much as I dreaded in precious health. That was a shocking alarm respecting the Major. It would indeed, Madam, have been a load of sorrows more than you could have borne.

I have just finished the stanzas³ I mentioned in my last. Allow me, my dear Friend, to dedicate them to you as a Relique at the shrine of friendship—a friendship that makes so large a share of the enjoyment of my existence. If ever I print it, permit me to prefix your name ; and if the period of publication should be at some (I hope very) distant time, when you and I may perhaps be in worlds as different as Heaven and Earth, and should I be the survivor, I shall certainly mention it —

Sacred to the Memory of a much-valued and dearly respected Friend.

Do, let me hear from you ! You cannot imagine what pleasure it will give me ! Adieu ! ROBT. BURNS.

Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop.

(1) Matthew Henderson of Tannochside (Lanarkshire) and Tannoch (Ayrshire), both of which estates he had to dispose of on account of financial embarrassments, ex-lieutenant in the army, ex-civil servant and Government pensioner, a man about town, noted for his "wild sallies." Burns had made his acquaintance in Edinburgh when they both lived in St. James's Square. The first copy of the elegy was sent to Robert Cleghorn on 23d July, and it appeared in the *Edinburgh Magazine* for August of this year.

(2) William Burns, the poet's younger brother, died in London on the 24th July 1790.

(3) The two stanzas quoted by Burns in his letter of the 9th July were incorporated in the song "Sensibility how charming," which is No. 329 in the fourth volume of Johnston's *Museum*, 1792. A complete copy was sent to Mrs. Dunlop (see *postea*, p. 92), and on 15th December 1791 Burns wrote to Clarinda, "I have likewise sent in the verses on *Sensibility* altered to

Sensibility how charming,
Dearest Nancy, thou canst tell :

to the musical editor of the *Scots Songs*." And so the line appeared in the *Museum*, notwithstanding the promise of dedication to Mrs. Dunlop contained in this letter.

ELEGY ON CAPTN. MATTHEW HENDERSON¹

Should the Poor be flattered? — SHAKESPEAR.

O Death, thou tyrant fell and bloody !
The meikle devil wi' a woodie,
Haurl thee hame to his black smiddie,
 O'er hurcheon hides ;
And like stockfish come o'er his studdie
 Wi' thy auld sides !

halter
drag, smithy
hedgehog
strike, anvil

Ye hills, near neebors of the starns, stars
That proudly cock your cresting cairns ;
Ye cliffs, the haunts of sailing yearns eagles
 Where Echo slumbers ;
Come join, ye Nature's sturdiest bairns,
 My wailing numbers.

Mourn, ilka grove the cushat kens ; every, wood-pigeon
Ye hazelly shaws, and breerie dens ; coppices
Ye burnies, wimplin down your glens brooks, winding
At toddlin leisure,
Or o'er the linns wi' hasty stens leaps
Flinging your treasure.

Mourn, little harebells o'er the lea;
Ye stately foxgloves fair to see;
Ye woodbines hanging bonnilie
In scented bowers;
Ye roses on your thorny tree,
The first of flowers.

At dawn, when every grassy blade
Droops with a diamond at its head;

At even, when beans their fragrance shed
 I th' rustling gale;
 Ye maukins whiddin' thro' the glade hares, skipping
 Come join my wail.

Mourn, ye wee sangsters of the wood;
 Ye grouse that crap the heather-bud;
 Ye curlews skirlin' thro' a clud; screaming
 Ye whistlin' pliver:
 And mourn, ye birrin' paitrick brood, partridge
 He's gane for ever.

Mourn, sooty coots, and speckled teals;
 Ye fisher-herons watching eels;
 Ye deuk and drake, wi' airy wheels
 Circling the lakes;
 Ye bitterns, till the quagmire reels,
 Rowte for his sake. Roar

Ye houlets frae your ivy bower, owls
 In some auld tree, or aulder tower,
 What time the moon wi' silent glowl
 Sets up her horn,
 Wail thro' the dreary midnight hour
 Till waukife morn. wakeful

Mourn, clamouring craiks at close of day,
 'Mang fields o' flowering claver gay;
 And when ye wing your annual way
 Frae our cauld shore,
 Tell thae far worlds, wha lies in clay,
 Whom we deplore.

O rivers, forests, hills and plains!
 Oft have ye heard my rustic strains:
 But now what else for me remains
 But tales of woe;
 And frae my een the drapping rains
 Must ever flow!

And lights his soul from genius' brightest ray ;
When to the bankrupt such a loan is lent,
The just equivalent is — sure — content.

MY DR. SIR,— You beg my writing, and assure me it will give you pleasure. Would to God you may find it so ! I find comfort in the very suggestion, though I dare not call it hope of success. Your sorrow is of too bitter a nature for consolation. Reason talks, but, alas ! Nature feels, and her feelings are uncontrollable. Yet let reason, nay even fancy talk, since, like the wailing of the lapwing, they lure us from a real object.

Let not, my friend, life's transient ills molest :
'T is trifling suited to the female breast ;
With stronger grasp embrace th' Almighty plan,
And feel with all the dignity of man.

Since my distresses console you, be comforted. I went home yesterday, where I found my son with his arm broke and hung in a sling this ten days ; and his eye still as blue as a Scots bonnet. Yet such is still the state here I could not stay with him more than a night. Poor Susan ! Her fate has a thousand aggravations you know not of. If you come for Mrs. Burns, come here and see me. Your friend Mr. Dugald Stewart has just brought home his wife to Catrine (my Euphrosine). The happiness of your friends is a more generous source of comfort than my sorrows. Come and rejoice with him. I send you a letter I got this morning from Mr. Corbet. Remember what I said to you of him, and don't lose his goodwill if it can do you any good. Preserve it as a pledge of mine. I shall send your copy of Mylne's Works to Mossziel. Perhaps I shall not be able to write with it. If so, it will disappoint me more

than it can do you, but I am continually employed, and, besides, I had hardly shut my last letter to you when I was taken very ill, and hardly ate an ounce for eight days. Yet I am now quite well again. I had a superstitious terror about Andrew, so that I felt relieved rather than otherwise when I heard or rather when I saw the state his fall had put him in. I now hoped the blow I had feared was struck and past, and I was proud of the manner in which he bore it, for his greatest concern seemed to be the fear of my being made uneasie, to prevent which he found some good reason for writing me a letter every day, though without ever saying a syllable of the accident, which happened just eleven days ago as he was coming here to see us. I think I shall still be here at least a fortnight longer; so do write me, and say if you mean being in this side of the world at this time. I wish I were a member of Parliament that I might save you the 6d. you will pay for this, but I wished you to see Corbet's own words before you see himself, and I could not for a particular reason enclose it to Kerr. I believe while that subsists I should not write so often, as it is really picking your pocket. If I am not wholly annihilated, I will be proud of the posthumous testimony you purpose dedicating to me and friendship. 'T is a compliment said to the world, but an inexpressible pleasure to me, to believe you have already said to your own heart that you were my friend and believed me yours.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

Here and in the preceding letter we have at last confirmation of the common story that Mrs. Burns spent part of the summer of 1790 in Ayrshire, thus permitting her husband to break the good domestic

habits which he had set himself to form, and, all unwittingly, supplying the cause, though no excuse, for the *liaison* which the poet contracted this year with Ann Park, of the Globe Inn, Dumfries.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

8th August 1790.

DEAR MADAM,— After a long day's toil, plague and care, I sit down to write to you. Ask me not why I have delayed it so long! It was owing to hurry, indolence and fifty other things; in short, to any thing—but forgetfulness of *la plus aimable de son sexe*. By the bye, you are indebted your best curtsey to me for this last compliment, as I pay it from a sincere conviction of its truth—a quality rather rare in compliments of these grinning, bowing, scraping times.

Well, I hope writing to you will ease a little my troubled soul. Sorely has it been bruised to-day! A *ci-devant* friend of mine and an intimate acquaintance of yours has given my feelings a wound that I perceive will gangrene dangerously ere it cure. He has wounded my pride! . . .

R. B.

*Ad. Mr. ROBERT BURNS, Ellisland,
Dumfries.*

LOUDOUN CASTLE, 18th Augt. 1790.

[Franked by Kerr: Edinr., Twenty-first Augt. 1790.]

DR. BURNS,— There is a certain time of our lives when we are reckoned accountable to our parents; afterwards a woman is thought answerable to her husband. I alas! have outlived both these dependencies, and arrived at that period when some think they are wholly their own mistresses, and may just do as it happens, or as they please, without minding how it is received by others. I again think our

sex ever dependent and accountable by duty or inclination, not only for our general conduct to the world, but for our thoughts, words, and deeds, to our families, relations, and above all to our friends, to whom it is not sufficient that we are sincere and affectionate, but we ought never, if possible, to leave their mind one moment doubtful of our having that degree of warmth of regard which we really possess and believe important to their happiness. 'Tis for this cause I think it incumbent upon me to account for my being visiting the other day when I was just telling you I could not command as much time as write you along with Mylne's Poems, which you will receive without a line from me, except just some scrawl to know it by on the first leaf, and a few scratches with a pencil at some places which, for some cause or other, I noted more than the rest in running them over, which I did in a very overly [cursory] manner, my mind being always occupied about something else the whole time. When you heard I went home, you would think that natural, and forgive me, but when you were told I left the distrest inhabitants here to go and congratulate a new-married pair, one of whom I never saw before, you would be surprised, and at least observe I differed from the text that prefers the house of mourning, nor, I am half afraid, would the observation be wholly free from sarcastic, indignant contempt. Even my telling you the man was Professor Stewart would not seem an apology for such an unnatural desertion of poor Mrs. Henri; nor would even my fondness for his wife be a competent cause for so quickly shifting the scene. But, while I leave the world to animadvert on my seeming giddiness, I will freely tell you I had an errand besides my fondness for the lady,¹ and that second-hand

esteem which you perhaps, more than any one else, had inspired me with for the gentleman, which made me haste to Catrine, and I was not disappointed. Mr. Stewart even anticipated all I could have wished, and I flatter myself made my visiting him the greatest compliment I could have paid to poor Susan. As if the shock she had suffered had not been severe enough to add to its bitterness, about a fortnight after his own death happened that of an old grand-uncle of poor Henri's, who, ignorant that he was just gone before, bequeaths him all his fortune, amounting to near £20,000, of which now I'm pretty much persuaded his wife or child can never touch a *louis-d'or*; but of this perhaps your friend may be able to get me better information. Meanwhile, I have not told her a word of the matter. Poor soul! she has enough already on her mind; perhaps, indeed, enough to make all this quite forgotten. Could she be sure of bread for herself and her child in case it ever live to need it, the rest, I believe, would at present appear very insignificant to her. Yet it must have its importance in the eyes of her mother. I wish I could, instead of all this self-interesting business, write something more suited to amuse you, but unless it can please to tell you a comparative compliment payed to merit when contrasted with wealth in that part of the country you once inhabited, I cannot say what should interest you more than myself. I was a stranger; so was my servant; the roads were intricately crost and perplext. We asked the way to Bullockmill; they answered carelessly "Hold up the brae." I then asked the way to Catrine; every one I spoke to run a little way on to shew it, and seemed perfectly in earnest that we should not mistake. I cannot tell you how much this trifle pleased

me, but when I arrived I was really delighted. I never saw more modest, gentle, mild manners in a man. I don't believe but I like him better already than you did your Matthew, spite of all the beautiful flowers you have gathered for his grave, or the variety of birds you invoke to sing his requiem. Though I'm afraid I am but little given to love Heaven better than earth, I like the stanza where the heavenly bodies are introduced better than all the beasts, birds, flowers, or fishes, from which, however, don't, I beg you, infer that I am the writer in the newspaper who thanks you so much for making her study astronomy, for I daresay no man would write such far-fetched insipidity as that admirer of yours who signs a K to her sleepy composition, for which I think you may feel the more grateful, as you will hardly be made very vain. But talking of praise, I ought to tell you Jenny Little says you are very stupid, did not come and see her when you were at Mauchline. She is sure she would not grudge going five times as far to see you. Nay, had she not been lame she would have gone on purpose to Mr. Alexander's, that she might have seen the house you lived in and the reeky spence where you wrote the "Vision." I am almost hoping this will not find you at home, that you will be set out for Ayrshire to carry home your wife and son. Should that be the case, I flatter myself you will not grudge to come a little further, either to see Jenny or me. You may trust to female vanity that each will appropriate a sufficient part of the compliment to herself. Indeed, you have experience how ready I am to catch at every instance of kindness or regard from one whose esteem I value so highly, and whose distinctions, indeed, teach me to value myself in a degree which self-love would other-

wise, I think, have well-nigh forgotten, and which the general run of insignificant acquaintances one makes at threescore is very ill calculated to make them recall, even if they were in earnest to wish it, which is hardly to be expected they should. Your Elegy on M. H. is a beautiful description of nature, whose minute features are hit off with accuracy, and show the hand of a master. But were they not gathered together by indignation at human indifference for poor plain worth, I should think it was too great a task for disappointed tenderness and indolent, weeping affection to leave the original theme of their sorrow, and go in quest of so large a collection of foreign objects. Yet an old woman of threescore is but an indifferent judge.. What are the expressions of fond friendship when a young poet at eight-and-twenty is seated on the turf that covers the last remains of a friend whom he had accompanied through all the jovial scenes that youth, health, wit, and mirth affords, and sympathy of soul inspires. 'Tis a most poetic assemblage, a fine composition ; but should you ever form a garland for me, I would rather bespeak it less luxuriant. A plain sprig of the larix, if you please, would satisfy my ambition, since we are told it can remain unchanged 200 years—no bad emblem for friendship in this soil, where few can reach a tenth of the duration. But let us, my friend, live and die in hope that the plant, when transplanted, will flourish beyond the line of time or of Napier's Logarithms to number its years, though he had wrot his tables on as large paper as I write on to you, tho', indeed, you sometimes emulate me. But what a gainer should I be did we use the same letter-types, since, however ridiculous you may think the alledgence, one line of mine contains more than six of your very best

— a matter of fact which, I am sure, you cannot pretend to deny. So, this being granted, you will not find fault that you got some more of them in the cover, for this will not do, as it is those I wrot on being told Catrine was advertised for sale from dislike to the cotton mills. My son's arm is so well he visited us here two days ago. We all begin to get better but poor Mrs. H., who has never yet left her room but for a moment till it was swept. Farewell ! May Heaven allow us all to forget our sorrows ! Could my best wishes alleviate yours, you know you have them. Write me by return of the post to make up for my disappointment if you are not coming to this country, and tell me if you got mine enclosing a letter I sent you from Corbet. You never sent me back the copy of the Address to Pitt. Remember, I expect it, for I never quit anything you once give me. Besides, as you tell me, you seldom have wrot prose, I want to see whether you improve or fall off in future. Farewell ! Write me here. I shall still have time to get your letter before I leave this place, if you are not too too indolent. I send this to Kerr.— Your sincere friend,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

MY FAIR EUPHROSINE

Ten years are past since in thy opening face
I traced the features of the youngest Grace;
Since mutual love thy hand has given
To bless a man the favourite of heaven.

(1) Professor Dugald Stewart married in 1790 (*en secondes noces*) Helen d'Arcy Cranstoun, daughter of the Hon. George Cranstoun. She was a poetess; at least one of her songs “The tears I shed must ever fall,” is not forgotten.

*Ad. Mr. ROBERT BURNS, Elliesland,
Dumfries.*

LOUDOUN CASTLE, 23rd Sept. 1790.

[Franked by Kerr: Edinr., Twenty-eighth Sepr. 1790.]

Does your own distresses make you forget me and mine? If so, indeed our souls have no sympathy, for not a day goes over my head that I do not think of you a thousand times, and envy that genius which would not only put it in my power to soothe the sorrows of my suffering friends, but speak peace to my own mind, rack'd with cares I cannot mend, and know not how to support. Yet even my own insignificant turn for rhyme is not quite useless for the one of those purposes, although too cold and insipid to please or afford consolation where I would wish to apply it to others. I have often drawn advantage from it myself, and when I can do nothing else in life, can frequently read Spanish, or write chimes, for I dare not affront your profession so much as to call it poetry, spite of the innumerable times I have affronted your taste by allowing you to read the compositions which, spite of the clink at the end of the lines, were indeed generally as much the real sentiments, feelings, or imaginations of your friend as if wrot in plain prose. I would fain make an apology for not writing you, were it not a contradiction when I reflect that a quire of paper would hardly contain those I have repeatedly made before, doing it too often, and encroaching on your leisure or wearing out your patience. Indeed, I feel an indulgence in persuading myself that you require an apology, and are either blaming or regretting the uncommon length of time I have kept silence. Perhaps you are doing neither, and will never remember the particularity till reading this make you recollect that I have not plagued you this month. But how long will it be before I forget that on the month of

August, just two years ago, I received four letters from you, for which my gratitude is at this moment as warm as ever; so much so that when I look out and see the country overflowed around me, the wind blowing a tempest, and the cut corn swimming down the river, my son John and you rush together upon my mind, the tear swims in my eye, and I am almost sincere in wishing you had never either seen or wrot to me. How proud did I feel once in thinking my advice had had some hand in making you what I earnestly wished you to be — a respectable, happy farmer, with an easie, independent competence, blest with industrious health and cheerful leisure, disposed to bestow many hours upon the Muses, and now and then not grudging to dedicate to me as a friend whom you recollect with pleasure, or even sometimes with those emotions of gratitude which warm, generous tempers feel for those who sincerely wish their prosperity, altho' wholly unblest with any capacity of improving it. Now I am afraid, when you throw back a disappointed, retrospective glance, you may give me a silent curse, as I am almost ready sometimes to give myself, for at least not holding my tongue. Yet this is a cool prudence I have never hitherto been able to command where I was really interested, nor can I say, if you were still to do me the honour of asking my opinion on any subject material to your future plans, if past experience would teach me sense enough to consider that there was even something infinitely preposterous in my pretending to pass my judgment on any point you had already or were about to investigate; it were like a mole attempting to teach Sir I. Newton astronomy. Well, should the great philosopher afterwards have gone wrong, sure he would never have blamed the poor moodiwart [mole]; so may I not hope you too will overlook your

poor blind monitress, who certainly, to the utmost of her power at least, endeavoured to mislead you by strewing every flower she could gather over that path she would herself have wished to tread, and which she believed talents like yours could not only smooth, but make delightful with every embellishment of nature or of art. But how is hope faded away with us both! It was at Morham I then saw her flourish, and it is at Loudoun I now make the cruel, heart-cutting reflection. What a place this for despondency; a standing pool of unmoved water covers the face of the country under my view, and a black cloud above it darkens the sky. Indeed, the scene without is in a great measure the picture of what I feel within, while I contemplate desolation and disappointment overflow and darken all those fair prospects which worth, health, beauty and perpetual good-humour seemed to guard from all dangers, and were guaranteed at least to all appearance as long as I could have any concern in this world by the flattering promise of blooming twenty-three, supported by cheerful contentment and the wholesome exercise and sobriety of a country life. Alas! say you, it is just the same at London. Yes, my friend, I too have felt it so. Your sorrow, though it resembles, does not alleviate mine. My only brother lies in Westminster Abbey since he was seven-and-twenty. This was my first, and many afflictions have followed it; even yours adds another score to the list, and makes me run it all over again with renewed pain. Oft have I wished to write, and oft to hear from you. Something has intercepted my gratification in both, and I can equally little account for either. Yet, if you saw poor Susan, who indeed sees nobody, and never leaves her room, you would not wonder that her mother's mind should be benumbed into an inactivity like

her own. Her unwieldy bulk, her deprest spirits, the uncertainty of her own prospects or those of her child, if it is ordained to survive the horrid presage with which its dawning day is overcast, throw a gloom over me that I cannot break through. I flattered myself for a great while with the hope of seeing you here, as I thought you would possibly come to the country to carry home your wife and child, when I persuaded myself you would have favoured me with a call, and should I have been able to keep you a day, said to myself, "This were so much time stole from misery." But day after day has stole away from my life, and not a word of you, nor do I know if Mrs. Burns is still in Ayrshire, or gone. I dare not now believe I have the least chance of seeing you, or even of hearing from you, as you should not perhaps know where to find me. I therefore must not omit telling you I have not been from this, but one night at home to see Andrew, and next day a call at Catrine in hope Mr. Stewart might have procured me some intelligence of the French law with regard to the birth of Susan's child in a foreign country. But even in this the troubles of that nation have prevented me, while those of India excite alarms for my boys now become strangers in that strange land. I am surprized to find I have wrote over my paper, almost sorry, too, since it is now too big for the short road, and will be so much longer of reaching you; not that I presume to believe that can be material to you, but it delays the point of time to which I can look for an answer, and that is always material to myself.

Jenny Little is just come in to mend the fire, which leads me to say she has wrote some things of late I would have sent you, as they were interesting from the subject to myself. They are, however, too long and too mournful for

transcribing at present. She says ten guineas would make her as happy as worldly circumstances could do. Is it not a pity of me that can hear this and not copy the man in the *Guardian* or *Spectator*, who set down the article in his pocket-book "How to make a Man happy £10?" Yet I think were her rhymes properly put out, as the phrase is, she might be made happy and indebted to none but herself, since her modest wishes are placed within such humble bounds, and I dare even say there would be some of the collection not unworthy your reading, perhaps honoured with your applause, tho' you well know I have no reason to call you lavish of that. Yet I remember you once too did commend some lines of mine a little, I doubt ironically, were it not that your hardly ever acknowledging the receipt of many others might convince me of your unaffected candour as a critic; while I shall evince my unsteadie caprice as one with regard to an Elegy you lately sent me, of which I have wholly changed my opinion, and now think it not only beautifully poetical but pathetically affectionate and tender, and a native picture of indignant sorrow for worth under-rated by the world and unfavoured by fortune. Yet I still admire the end of it most, perhaps because my views of nature are too much from my chamber window, while yours pursue her from her most solitary steps to those grand exhibitions at which men and angels wonder. But to return to poor Jenny. I shall send you a few lines she gave me one day lately on Keith's drawing a blank in the last lottery, but to instruct my ignorance and hers too, I will beg you would just write over a verse or two of it, and return me just as a thing should be done for the press; for I have a curiosity to see what that requires, and as it is not a great deal of trouble, I make no scruple to beg you will

indulge it by sending me this little specimen enclosed on a slip of separate paper in the first letter you favour me with. Tell me too how you stand this dismal harvest, and whether you have seen Corbet, also if ever you opened your Address to Mr. Pitt, for it runs in my head some lines of mine were within it, and I shall be sorry any body got them for whom they were not intended. Besides, you were bound in common honesty, not to say discretion, to send me back that Address, or at least a copy of it, unless you have found me less worthy of your confidence than you believed me when you formerly sent it me. But it's time I begun Jenny's address to the young Lady.

Celia fair beyond description
Soon became the favourite toast ;
Charms unrival'd, even by fiction,
Did the lovely maiden boast.

.

I have hardly left room to say I shall still be here till Mrs. Henri lie in. To you, who like a faith reason cannot protest against, wish to be a good Christian, and believe with all your heart every thing necessary to soothe the mind and regulate the conduct here, or point to bliss hereafter, shall I mention as a pleasure the works of Samuel Bourn,¹ an English dissenter. He possesses a noble, manly freedom of mind and a great flow of elegant expression. I wish I heard what you thought of his doctrines. I am sure you must like his clear, bold, unaffected, undoubting and undisguised way of telling his story. Samuel Bourn is at present my best companion ; tho' bound in sheepskin, I hope he is not an wolf in sheep's clothing. Write me whether or not you have got Mylne's book, which I sent to Catrine to be sent you, as they told me they had an op-

portunity of conveyance which I had not, as I have no servant here and little intercourse with any body. Farewell ! I shall be sorry if you are as weary reading this as my eyes sore with a cold feel in writing it.— Believe me, sincerely your friend,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Probably Samuel Bourn (1714-1796) who was educated partly at Glasgow University, and became the colleague of John Taylor of Norwich, whose *Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin* had influenced Burns in his youth.

Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop, Loudon.

(Per favor of Mr. Lawrie.)

ELLISLAND, 6th Oct. 1790.

DEAR MADAM,— Your last letter¹ came to me exceedingly opportune indeed. I was just beginning to get the better of a malignant squinancy and slow fever which had tormented me for three weeks and had actually brought me to the brink of the grave. I inclose you Mr. Corbet's letter. I have not seen him, but from the gentleman's known character for steady worth, there is every reason to depend on his promised friendship.

I am glad to hear by my friend Mr. Archd. Lawrie that your good family are getting rather better in health and spirits. Health! the greatest enjoyment on earth, and wanting which, all other enjoyments are of poor avail. This sentiment I have lately felt in all its force.

I give you joy of the works of Mr. Bourne, which you tell me you are reading. I once had the first Volume, and was so delighted with it that I could have almost repeated it verbatim. We can no more live without Religion, than we can live without air; but give me the Religion of Senti-

ment and Reason. You know John Hildebroad's famous epitaph —

Here lies poor old John Hildebroad ;
Have mercy on his soul, Lord, God,
As he would do, were he Lord God,
And thou wert poor John Hildebroad.

This speaks more to my heart, and has more of the genuine spirit of Religion in it, than is to be found in whole waggon-loads of Divinity. I have not a moment more left.
Adieu !

ROBT. BURNS.

(1) Kerr did not despatch it from Edinburgh till the 28th.

While in the midst of the composition of the following letter Mrs. Dunlop received a copy of a portion of "Tam o' Shanter." Whence it came, and whether it was MS. or print, it is impossible to tell. There is no printed copy known earlier in date than that in the *Edinburgh Magazine* of March 1791, and it is difficult to imagine who could have sent Mrs. Dunlop a fragmentary MS., unless indeed it were Ainslie, and he does not seem to have been particularly intimate with her. Burns, as will be seen, afterwards sent Mrs. Dunlop a full copy of the poem, which is preserved in the collection now in Mr. Adam's hands, and she took dire offence at some passage or other not contained in the fragment she saw at first, probably the lines beginning —

Now Tam, O Tam, had thae been queans.

The MS. has the following preface : — " Aloway-kirk, the scene of the following poem, is an old ruin

in Ayrshire, hard by the road from Ayr to Maybole, on the banks of the river Doon, and very near the old bridge of that name. A drawing of this old ruin, accompanied perhaps with ‘Tam o’ Shanter,’ will make its appearance in Grose’s Antiquities of Scotland.”

Ad. Mr. ROBERT BURNS, Ellisland,
near Dumfries.

LOUDOUN CASTLE, 7th Novr. 1790.

MY DR. SR., — Were you a woman and truly by character a female, I might tell and make you enter into the thousand indescribable circumstances which have of late employed me, and which some French author says on another occasion it is impossible to analyse while one feels them. Perhaps, too, if I could, you would think it little worth while, and lest that should be the case, I will not make the attempt. You may remember I once advised you to drink yourself out of a fever. I am told you have lately reversed that plan, and along with your friend Nicol got into one, which, however, I was glad to hear from Mr. A. Lawrie¹ was not incurable, since it did not prevent your traversing the farm with him, and being at Dumfries, to all appearance hale and hearty — an account which I truly rejoiced in, more especially when he added that you had this season the finest crop the land had carried this twenty years. I was more pleased with this than with your rencounter with the School-master,² who, the world says, has already damned you as an author, and now well-nigh killed you as a man. As to the first, I believe it impossible; as to the other, Heaven forfend it, at least in my time, during which I pray you may be preserved that I may have as long as I live one friend to whom I can write without a moment’s

reflection about what! Yet I feel sometimes mortified in reflecting that it seems all one to you whether I do it every day or not. For six weeks you never call me to account, never accuse me of unkindness or neglect, never require an apology for my silence, nor pen one supernumerary line to ask from what it proceeds. Shall I own, my friend, this superlative good-breeding has sometimes given me pain, and created a momentary suspicion, that you rather endured as wished my correspondence. At times this idea has froze the ink which at others flowed so freely from my pen. But now and then yours drops a paragraph really calculated to thaw it again, and make me ashamed of having harboured a thought injurious to you and degrading to your friend. No, since you have once given me this name, I will believe myself of it, conscious as I am of feeling that interest and esteem which gives the truest claim, and as I hope you are something of the opinion of Monsieur Dorat in the following French couplet, that will give me a stronger title still to your goodwill —

Plus mon ami peut m'être utile,
Moins j'ai de plaisir à l'aimer.

Is not this an extravagant enough thought, even for a poet? Yet I half suspect it is not wholly foreign to the soul and feelings of him to whom I write, and this very suspicion makes me glory much the more in flattering myself he receives my letters with pleasure, and sometimes wishes for them before they appear, notwithstanding the frequency of that event and the insignificance of all they contain. After all, you are really a strange creature, and I don't know sometimes what to make of you. There are occasions when the only way I can solve the riddle is by believing what I have often alledged, that you don't read

what I write, or that you have been set with Mr. Nicol at the time and forgot next morning; else you would now and then certainly do some of the little trifles I request of you, if not to please me, at least to show yourself not wanting in polite attentions to the ladies. *Par exemple*, you would have been at the trouble of writing over four lines as they ought to be for the press; 2ndly, you would have returned me your Premier's letter; 3rd, told me if you had got Mylne's book, etc. etc. etc. Now, the less a thing signifies in itself, the more I should have been flattered to see you bestow upon me a degree of remembrance too minute to find place in favours of a mere general acquaintance. But why should I say so, who feel every day that in the familiar ease of writing we often quit our subject to say some perfect nothing, as I have done till I shall not have room to tell you that I am the means of making you the admiration of distant nations. I spent a fortnight lately with a Portuguese educate in France, who in that time learnt to read and idolize your writings. He said he never liked poetry before, and was now convinced there was a spirit in it unknown to those nations; that he would speak of you as the greatest wonder he had ever met in visiting the East and West Indies, France, America; and would repeat your verses instead of his prayers to soothe his soul or thrill the blood in his veins in a way he had never believed in the power of verse till he read your *Cotter's Saturday Night*. He said he wondered if it was the superior force of your genius or the comparative weakness of other European languages that made the difference of effect he experienced, and by the bye I have just the self-same doubt, for poor Henri was not fond of poetry, and I never saw one to appearance more made to relish

its charms, had he been in use of meeting them in his native tongue, so that I really begin to suspect there is no such thing as a pathetic, touching poem in French; or if ever I have met one, I certainly have not understood it. I have been of late witnessing scenes such as a youthful poet would have almost been laughed at as wholly visionary had he presumed to feign—I mean the most fervent enthusiasm of friendship personified in the foreigner I have just been mentioning. He was a much loved and dearly loving friend of poor Henri, who, breaking through a thousand inconveniences, left London and came to Scotland to visit the tomb of his friend, and weep over his widow for a fortnight. On this occasion I presented him the lines below as an alleviation to his disappointment in missing half his errand by finding not a stone to point the place he looked for.

Wrot on a French gentleman's coming to Scotland to visit the grave of his Swiss friend buried there among the descendants of Sir William Wallace —

When Edward's fury bore our wealth away,
And robb'd our Chieftain's corse of covering clay,
Our ruin'd land no monument could raise,
In heart-wrung blood she stampt her hero's praise.
Six centuries past th' impression still has run,
Her genuine seal still marks her darling son.

.

Here last night my candle dropt into the socket, and obliged me to go to bed in the dark. I waked this morning to read a piece which no hand but one could have produced. Let me rejoice with you, my friend, that the torch of Hymen has not extinguished the little stars of imagination which shine in all the sparkling brightness of a clear frosty evening in the tale now before me.

Kings may be blest, but thou art glorious,
O'er all the ills of life victorious ;
As bees flee hame laden wi' treasure,
By thee ilk moment 's wing'd wi' pleasure.
But pleasures will not always last ;
They're like the rainbow in the blast :
Awhile it shows its lovely form,
Then vanishes amid the storm.
The wind blew as 't would blawn its last ;
The rattling showers rose on the blast,
Each in its cauld hand held a light,

To shew a sight no other conjurer on earth could have
called into being

A murderer's banes, in gibbet-airns ;
Twa span-lang, wee, unchristen'd bairns,
A thief new-cutted frae a rape,
Wi' his last gasp his gab did gape.
The grey-hairs yet stack to the heft :

These, with the heart and tongue that follow, with imagery beyond praise or comparison — never presses on earth shewed such groups as this little tale develops on the road and in the kirk, as well as at home and at the market. Dear Burns, by what heroic spell can I be able to lay another line e'er on your table? I have almost lost courage to send you an old ballad I had transcribed on purpose. But why have you defrauded me of a sheet where I find a thousand beauties besides those mark'd, which are inimitable? I don't think I will write you again until I can tell you of Susan. Pray, was what you said of Corbet burlesque or serious? You should put a mark, as modern authors do to their printed works, to distinguish praise and satire, and not trust too much to the cold brains and thick skulls of your readers, especially when they are wholly ignorant, as I am, on this subject. As it was, however,

possible you might been earnest, I wrote him again inquiring if he had seen you, and reminding him how much it was in his power to oblige me. My fire is gone out, and my fingers froze; so that, though I had more paper to do it on, I should not be able to do more than tell you I am still here, and will be long enough to hear from you, if you are not very unkind indeed, which I have no right to accuse you of till you shew yourself guilty. I am sure nobody values your letters so much as, dr. sr., yours,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Archibald Lawrie, son of the minister of Loudoun, and successor to his father in the charge. He had seen something of Burns in Edinburgh in 1787, and had kept up the acquaintance. There is record of a visit he paid to the poet at Dumfries in 1793. See the new *Chambers*, vol. iv. pages 13, 14.

(2) William Nicol, the Edinburgh High Schoolmaster, Burns's companion on his northern tour, and the "Willie" of "Willie brew'd a Peck o' Maut." It was in 1790 that Nicol bought a small estate in the parish of Glencairn, four or five miles from Ellisland, and no doubt he took possession in the autumn, and entertained his friend, as hospitably as he had done at Moffat in the previous year, when the immortal song was produced.

*Ad. Mr. ROBERT BURNS, Ellisland,
Dumfries.*

LOUDOUN CASTLE, 16th Novbr. 1790.

[Franked by Kerr: Edinr., Nineteenth Novr. 1790.]

Mv DR. SR., — It is always with pleasure I avail myself of the priviledge of writing to you; with double pleasure that I assure myself that my joy shall be your joy when I

tell you Mrs. Henri has just brought us a fine boy.¹ Not your own wight start and heir, with a voice like his great name-father, can promise better than our little Otway, for he is already a favourite of the Muses, laid in the lap of Jenny Little, and there addressed by your friend as follows : —

Thou gentle babe, whose lovely face
Smiles thro' cold winter's storm,
While foreign nations anxious wish
To hear if thou art born ;
Impatient fame flies o'er the seas
Thy natal hour to tell :
May peace and joy forever rest
Where thou art doom'd to dwell.

The same day brought us intelligence of the general peace,² and private pleasure by letters from India, saying James was well, and Anthony appointed to a ship now in China. As I was up all night on Sunday, and close with Mrs. Henri, who was severely ill on Monday till six at night, I shall add no more but that she has had a good night's rest, and seems to do well. So I shall once in my life have wrot you a letter you will not think too long, and begging you may give me a longer one in return, remain,
Dr. Burns, your much obliged humble svt.,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) 15th November 1790. Birth, at Loudoun Castle, Mrs. Henry, widow of James Henry, Esq., of Bernadean, of a son. — *Scots Magazine*.

(2) The danger of an outbreak of hostilities between France and Great Britain passed away for the time at this period, and a junction of Prussia and Austria promised to bring the struggle between Russia and Turkey to a close.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, November 1790.

"As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country." Fate, or Providence, or whatever is the true Appellation for the Power who presides over and directs the affairs of this our world has long owed me a letter of good news from you, in return for the many tidings of sorrow and woe which I have received from you. In this instance I most cordially obey the apostle — "Rejoice with them that do rejoice." For to me to *sing* for joy is no new thing; but to *preach* for joy, as I have done in the commencement of this Epistle, is a pitch of extravagant rapture to which I never rose before.

I read your letter — I literally *jumped for joy* — how could such a mercurial creature as a Poet lumpishly keep his seat on the receipt of the best news from his best Friend? I seized my gilt-headed Wangee¹ rod, an instrument indispensably necessary, in my left hand, in the moment of Inspiration and rapture — and stride — stride — quick and quicker — out skipt I among the broomy banks of Nith to muse over my joy by retail. To keep within the bounds of Prose was impossible. Mrs. Little's is a more elegant, but not a more sincere, Compliment to the sweet little fellow than I, extempore almost, poured out to him in the following verses: —

ON THE BIRTH OF A POSTHUMOUS CHILD, BORN
IN PECULIAR CIRCUMSTANCES OF FAMILY-
DISTRESS.²

November hirples o'er the lea,
Chill on thy lovely form ;
And gane, alas ! the shelt'ring tree
Should shield thee frae the storm !

May He, who gives the rain to pour
And wings the blast to blaw,
Protect thee from the driving show'r,
The bitter frost and snaw !

May He, the friend of woe and want,
Who heals life's various stounds,
Protect and guard the mother plant
And heal her cruel wounds !

But late she flourish'd, rooted fast,
Fair on the summer morn,
Now feebly bends she in the blast —
Unshelter'd and forlorn.

Blest be thy bloom, thou lovely gem,
Unscath'd by ruffian hand !
And from thee many a parent-stem
Arise to deck our Land !

I am much flattered by your approbation of my “Tam o' Shanter,” which you express in your former letter ; tho', by the bye, you load me in that said letter with accusations heavy and many, to all which I plead, *Not guilty !* Your book³ is, I hear, on the road to reach me. As to the printing of Poetry : when you prepare it for the Press you have only to spell it right and place the capital letters properly ; as to the punctuation, the Printers do that themselves.

I have a copy of “Tam o' Shanter” ready to send you by the first opportunity : it is too heavy to send by Post.

I heard of Mr. Corbet lately. He, in consequence of your recommendation, is most zealous to serve me. Please

favor me soon with an account of your good folks ; if Mrs. Henri is recovering, and the young gentleman doing well.—I am ever, my dear Friend and honored Patroness,
Yours sincerely,

ROBT. BURNS.

(1) A trade name for a slender yellow cane imported from Japan.

(2) First published in the *Scots Magazine* for December 1793.

(3) Mrs. Dunlop was about to print for private circulation a few sketches of her own, in prose and verse.

Burns now sent Mrs. Dunlop a complete copy of *Tam o' Shanter*, of which she had hitherto seen only a fragment. Its reception must have surprised him ; in all probability it highly offended him. Mrs. Dunlop in her answer of the 31st not only returned to the charge of indelicacy, on grounds suggested above (p. 106), but reverted to her remonstrance on the subject of his total abandonment of farming. In characteristic fashion she rubbed in the irritant, laying down her pen one day only to resume it on the same topic on the next, yet at the same time obviously attempting to atone for or distract attention from her offensive criticism by abnormal verbosity on other subjects. Burns did not condescend to defend himself ; he kept silence for some six or seven weeks. When he did write on the 7th of February he explained his silence by a fall with his horse. But that accident, whatever its date, did not prevent him from writing to Dunbar on 17th January, to Hill on

the same date, and to Cunningham on the 23rd—all three letters in a tone not inconsistent with the special aggravation which Mrs. Dunlop's attack might have produced, and which hers of the 28th shows that she feared it had produced.

*Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
Loudoun Castle.*

ELLISLAND, 6th Dec. 1790.

MADAM,—After tasking you with the perusal of so long a Poem, it would be Egyptian bondage to burthen you with an additional long letter.

I wrote you two or three days ago, which I hope has come to hand. I hope you take care that the sweet little Floweret is properly sheltered in this nipping Decemberly weather; for though Mrs. Little and I have planted a Parnassian bower round him, yet I fear the laurel will prove a very defenceless shade; at least, it has ever turned out a thin shelter for its Owners, and poorly qualified to fence off,

Poverty's cold wind and crushing rain!

I am half angry with you that you have not let me know ere now, how poor Mrs. Henri recovers. There is something so interesting in her situation that I cannot get her out of my head, morning, noon, or night. The first tragedy I ever saw performed was *Douglas*; and Mrs. Henri eternally puts me in mind of the horrors I felt for Lady Randolph's distresses. God forbid the sequel should be similar!

There is a fine copy of Blind Harry's history of Wallace printed at Perth, from a Manuscript of great antiquity

in the Advocates' Library; with an Engraving of him from a genuine picture in the possession of the Society of Antiquarians.

If I thought you had not seen it, I would send it you. It is the most elegant piece of work that ever came from any Printing-press in Great Britain.

There is likewise just published, Barbour's *Life of Robert Bruce*, done from an old Manuscript in the Advocates' Library. If I could get it safely sent, you might have it.— Adieu.

ROBT. BURNS.

*Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Ellisland,
near Dumfries.*

LOUDOUN CASTLE, 31st Dec. 1790.

The situation in which I sit down to write is one rather uncommon in my line of life — by candle light, at six o'clock in a cold morning of Decbr. This from a lady, from one of those whom education and the custom of a pretty long life has taught never to behold the rising sun, ought to be a compliment in some degree worthy of a poet. Indeed, I owe my friend some more than common testimony of gratitude for the goodness he has showed in remembering me, spite of my apparent negligence. May I hope my dedicating this early hour to tell you so will prove uncontestedly that I have wishes to snatch the first moments I could command to converse with and thank you for your letter, your poem, and your gilded card — all which I have had the pleasure, and let me add the pride, of receiving since I wrot you last. For, believe me, I boast to my own heart when I consider that I have not only been able to draw you into a correspondence, but that, instead of appearing fatigued with the tedious punctuality of answering my letters, you have given me two for one, and for once

exprest something like being half impatient to hear from me again ; for, although you place all this to your humanity for the distress and anxiety about the helpless and forlorn, I indulge myself in believing the intelligence either of the little flow'ret or the storm-beat mother plant would come far less welcome from any hand but my own. You see it is not difficult to flatter one so ready to meet it half way, and construe everything to her own advantage. It is often said we are ever ready to believe what we wish. I doubt the truth of this assertion, for I feel so sensibly the value I set upon acquiring a place in your partial esteem that I cannot for my life sometimes believe it possible I should at present really possess it, spite of all the pains I am conscious I have employed to that purpose, and which good nature and politeness could hardly help acknowledging. To be sure, in no one instance I had ever made so great an effort to set the best foot foremost as when I commenced rhymer in order to fix your attention, and divert my own from those painful feelings that then corroded my mind. Don't, however, believe it is for the same reason I am now become early riser and have outstripped the activity of the light to write you ; instead of which I only got up to make breakfast for my son and daughter who had past the night here, and were obliged to go home very early in the morning, when, instead of returning to bed after they set out, I took up the pen, though, as I daresay you are already convinced, without any plan what to do with it. Else I could never have trifled till now without telling you that I have got another son at Morham, the nineteenth born of or from me, besides nine daughters. Won't these afford one day ample field for the asses which Jenny Little has placed upon Parnassus? But apropos to

her, she has wrote on your last little sweet subject too. I would send you her lines were it not for the trouble of copying them, and that you say you mind nobody's but your own. Indeed, where yours appear, other people's are generally forgot; so *in this* you are only like the rest of the world — a circumstance perhaps not to be paralleled by you in any thing else, for I doubt if either India produces a greater exotic in most other respects, of which my correspondence, insignificant as it is, does not fail to furnish a proof, since without something very extraordinary it had never existed. Yet believe not I mean alwise to compliment you; far from it. My praises never go one iota beyond that point to which my idea of real or fancied merit reaches. You tell me you are obliged by my applause of a late production of yours. I had seen then only one half of it, and I applaud the editor, whoever he was, for I don't know his name. Yet he shows me the truth of an old axiom that "Fools should not see half done works," at least that they should not speak of them. Had I seen the whole of that performance, all its beauties could not have extorted one word of mine in its praise, notwithstanding you were the author. You know how hard it is upon a woman to hold her tongue. Why, then, my good friend, do you ever reduce me to so cruel a necessity? To be sure, you did not mean to send it me till I asked it, but 'tis not your showing me a thing, but your inclining to write it, that I think of, since I wish to contemplate characters exactly as they are, not just as they may chuse to appear in my company, especially when they are endowed with those qualities I am most disposed to love and esteem. 'Tis then I feel for their dignity, and every blot that seems black to another's eye makes mine water, yet does not

blind me so far as not to see the beauty of the simple and natural image of “snow falling in the river,”

A moment white, then gone for ever.

But I am interrupted, and I daresay you don’t regret it. I must bid adieu to you till to-morrow, and to the Year ’90 for ever.

1st Janry. ’91.

Let me begin by wishing you all the new joys of the New Year. May you be blest in friends and fortune, and, above all, preserve all you have of both, especially the first; for, alas! the acquisition of a thousand could not—at least I am sure I feel it so—compensate for the loss of one truly dear, though a new one at my time of life is valuable, if it were but for novelty. Yet, would Heaven prolong the loan of the few I have, I don’t thirst for any more, nor am so unreasonable as to expect them. Now that my own heart is become as cold as December, I wish it may not freeze my little Flow’rets, which are so early sung by Jenny and you. I wish it may not be too soon prizing green bear,¹ as the saying is, but meanwhile “the beams of bright wit, warm from Helicon, glow, and with beauteous flowerets embellish our snow.” Indeed, the lovely little creature is more charming in reality than all the powers of fancy can create, or else the decorations of tender distress make an irresistible impression on my mind. But, what is more material than beauty, he seems blest with a degree of health and strength I durst never have looked for in the circumstances in which he was ushered into being. His mother has never yet quit her room. Lord knows when she will. Yet I think she recruits in strength, but, alas! not in spirits to support her tragic fate. Why do you

never mention your little boy now? I hope he is well, and beg leave to enclose a New-Year's gift from his godmother, just to prove that, though you are silent about him, she can never forget the honour done her in his baptism. Poor little thing! I am sorry to think he will not grow up in that rural simplicity in which he was born as a farmer's son; but we are taught to believe what is best. Yet never have I had more difficulty to persuade myself of this than in some of the incidents of your life. I hope you are wiser than me, and don't look ever back discontented to anything you cannot help. Let me hear from you as soon as you can, if you don't think me impudent in the request, considering how ill I have of late seemed to deserve such indulgence. But I have only promised to be here till the 12th or 14th of this month, and do not well know where to bid you direct later, and should like to know if this comes safe to hand. But why need I urge a particular reason for wishing you to write soon, since there is no time your letters can come when they do not afford me one of the most elevated pleasures of my present superannuated days, which, spite of both age and fate, however, I do not feel unhappy—a change to which few things have contributed more than your pen and that goodness to me which encouraged me to get rid of many a dismal hour in writing you when I would have wrote no one else, and when my own thoughts were no balm for an wounded mind? It was then I found it in the unspeakable variety of yours; even your levities amused, serious pieces comforted, and tender ones soothed me. But tell me, my friend, why has genius so often a desire for childish levities? Why does these impurities fall even from a Shenstone or a Littleton, and corrupt others. Might not an

Exciseman glory in emulating the chaste pen of Thomson? Nay, ought he not to fear that what the world would pass in a Lord might be imputed to the low ribaldry to which his profession must frequently expose him? Envy is sharp-sighted, and ready at every catch to lay hold of those circumstances that enable her to pull down towering merit, which gives her the spleen by its successful superiority. You would rejoice with me in seeing the figure our friend the Dr.'s family² make in the newspapers, where one of his sons is marked for a Lieutenant-Colonel, the other as Master and Commander in the Navy, which he entered at the same time with Lord Gurliss [Garlies], who, besides being heir-apparent to a rich Earldom, had two uncles Admirals, and one at the head of the Privy Council, and whose claim is supported by the first interest in England. What pleasure must that father feel who is enabled, purely by the force of his own abilities, to push on his children equal with the foremost in birth, wealth, and interest, while he beholds them unequalled in real merit and agreeable qualities, proud of his talents, and grateful for his affection, in which indeed he excels all I ever knew. To this his children owe an education suited to the prince or the peasant, in which their minds and bodies were alike remembered, their constitutions mended by his medical skill, their morals attended to, and every idea impress that could improve benevolence, friendship, or humanity, encourage industry, prudence and economy, repress arrogance, petulance, barbarity, or insolence, and blend the goodness of a Christian with the spirit and freeborn independence of a man, fit to work out his own way in a world with which he is early and properly made acquainted, so as to serve others without being a dupe himself; to feel himself so truly well in-

structed and ready knowing as to be always beloved, modest, and unassuming. Nor did the Dr. even stop here. The ornamental acquirements were added, exterior as well as interior, with a profusion which no other man in similar circumstances could have reached. But to this end every effort of his soul tended ; for this he practised physick, wrot books, calmed an ungovernable spirit of his own, and studied the face of nature and the mind of man, to turn every thing to their advantage. Behold in him a noble instance what assiduity and perseverance can perform. He was the son of a poor Scots clergyman, unaided by everything except the tenderest love and most reverential esteem of the best wife ever a man choise for the mother of that family which was to constitute such a part of his future pride, consequence and happiness in this world, and, I believe, inspire his fondest hopes and wishes for another ; for his regard is too strong not to be immortal, and his mind too comprehensive not to be pious. The varieties in his character gave him innumerable advantages for instructing youth, and he employed them all carefully, and has been gloriously rewarded in the fruits of his labour. John Moore was a little of a poet, too, though in this far far inferior to my friend. May I not perhaps one day look down from Heaven and see how far you have gained ground upon him in the race of life, and been enabled to hand on my little godson up the same steps to worth, fame and fortune, tho', poor little thing ! he and his three little companions in infancy here and at Morhame must begin the farce playing at the foot of the stair of Dame Fortune's temple ? 'Tis hard to say but some of them may climb the pinnacle even before your eyes are shut up from the prospect. Why may we not believe there lies as many

degrees of latitude to the side of prosperity as compose that immeasurable tract we sometimes feel markt by almost instantaneous adversity? Alas! my poor little Henri! Sixteen days robbed you of rank, friends and fortune, before you saw the light. God alone knows what the turn of the scale may bring. Meanwhile, you have got a good nurse and good health—the most important favours Providence could at present send, and to those let us leave thee for a time.

Do you know what has of late employed me and, I believe, helpt to prevent my pestering you with so many letters as I used sometimes to do? I have wrought a year to get a man into a small employment for bread to a small family. At last I happened to succeed, and he has got himself turned out in a week. I am now endeavouring to get one fixt in Bedlam, where I have no interest, and know not where to begin; but the work is very necessary, and I shall do my utmost to struggle through it. Another thing has taken me a little up too has been getting French letters, which I am at a loss to understand. I know you have made a study of that language. Pray do help me a little if you can guess at the sense of the following paragraph, which I shall copy as exactly as I can for your translation: —

“ Si mes bonnes étoiles me permettent d’aller en Ecosse, je serai charmé de faire la connaissance de Mr. Burns, afin de lui exprimer mon admiration pour ses excellents ouvrages que j’ai prêté à quelques connaissances, et il n’y en a pas une qui ne partage mon enthousiasme pour un genius aussi simple dans ses vers, que sublime dans ses idées.” I hope part of the employment of the ’91 shall be studying the numbers of that author who once honoured me with a New-Year’s Ode, and I would fain think may now be writing me,

as you once told me you habitually remembered your friends with the return of the season, and set apart naturally particular days of the year, when the ideas of friendship or devotion recurred with redoubled energy, such as New-Year's-day, the first Sunday of May, etc., when you had singular pleasure in dedicating time to the sacred haunts of your youth and the attachments of your early years. When the mind's eyes run over Ayrshire, I indulge a pleasing expectation of coming in for a part share of that favourite recollection. Perhaps you do me the justice to think I would relish the contemplation, and feel a communication of it a new sanctification of the holiday, which would make me look forward to its return with more soothing, contemplative, musing melancholy, should another return of it be allotted me, or look back with silent resignation to those past eras which, in robbing me of much, had nevertheless left me their debtor for the acquaintance whose sweet numbers, kind letters and friendly attentions must forever imprint them in my grateful memory. I have got the copy you were so good as offer me of *Wallace*, and I believe I have likeways one of the eldest black Saxon copies of *Bruce*. Otherwise I should have catched at your offer. Meanwhile, I feel just as much obliged by your making it as if I had accepted. But perhaps you had means to enhance the value by some lines along with the book. If so, these are still my right, and I cannot part with one jot or one tittle of it, but must beg your still letting me have them to give value to my own book, in which I confess I have not skill to find all the advertised perfections. Would Providence but cover your fields as close with grass and corn as I have covered my paper, I should rejoice over it with a pleasure which I doubt this poor crop can hardly afford you. I remember

I had once a cousin grow old and dotard ; he could never recognise his wife's picture when it was put into a new frame. I am frequently afraid, amid repeated removals and transmigrations, I should at last no longer be able to distinguish the sweet native rose of Mossgiel should it cease to bloom in Ellisland. If so, I'm sure I shall preserve a thorn to rattle like the foot of Philoctetes. Adieu ! this letter is either worth three or good for nothing. I hope you will allow the first, and so think yourself in my debt, and write me immediately, so that I may get yours before I leave this. Perhaps I may be some few days beyond the 12th, tho' I think it will not be long. I have not left room almost for a name, but it is needless. I suppose nobody else writes you as much nonsense at one time as, Dr. Burns, your sincere friend and obedient humble Servt.,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Estimating a crop before it is ripe.

(2) John Moore this year succeeded to the colonelcy of the 51st regiment. His younger brother Graham (afterwards Sir Graham, Admiral, who did distinguished service in the French wars), was promoted on 22nd November, 1790, to be commander of the *Bonetta* sloop.

To BURNS.

¹ Mrs. Dunlop's best compts. to Mr. Burns. Unexpectedly employed about the unlooked-for distress of an unfortunate friend, she forgot to let him know she is still at Loudoun Castle, where she will be glad to hear from him, and to know whether a letter she wrot on New Year's Day, containing good wishes for him and his family, and the compliments of the season, more particularly to her little

godson, ever reached Ellisland. She has likewise the pleasure of telling him the little blossom still blooms as fresh and beautiful as ever, and the mother has at last got into the hall; so that she hopes soon to get home, yet wishes first to have an answer to the above question. She begs the thousand nameless attentions required about the truly unhappy may be an apology for her silence, if it is not too much presumption to suppose it needs any. Yet should vanity mislead her so far, the poet must remember his former goodness has laid some foundation for it, and gratitude ought not to be construed into folly. Miss Dunlop is still very far from well. This, added to the care of her daughter's house and child, and any assistance she can afford her afflicted friends at Edinburgh, must for a while employ all Mrs. Dunlop's spare time and spirits, and deprive her of the pleasure of repeating to Mr. Burns with what esteem she always is his obliged and obedient, humble servt. Please address still here, and write first post.

28th Jany. 1791.

(1) Written on a scrap of paper. The date is on the docket only.

ELLISLAND, *7th February 1791.*

When I tell you, Madam, that by a fall, not from my horse but with my horse, I have been a cripple some time, and that this is the first day my arm and hand have been able to serve me in writing; you will allow that it is too good an apology for my seemingly ungrateful silence. I am now getting better and am able to rhyme a little, which implies some tolerable ease, as I cannot think that the most poetic genius is able to compose on the rack.

I do not remember if ever I mentioned to you my having

an idea of composing an elegy on the late Miss Burnet¹ of Monboddo. I had the honor of being pretty well acquainted with her and have seldom felt so much at the loss of an acquaintance as when I heard that so amiable and accomplished a piece of God's works was no more. I have as yet gone no farther than the following fragment, of which please let me have your opinion. You know that elegy is a subject so much exhausted that any new idea on the business is not to be expected : 't is well if we can place an old idea in a new light. How far I have succeeded as to this last you will judge from what follows.

ELEGY

ON THE LATE MISS BURNET OF MONBODDO

Life ne'er exulted in so rich a prize
As Burnet, lovely from her native skies ;
Nor envious Death so triumph'd in a blow
As that which laid th' accomplish'd Burnet low.

Thy form and mind, sweet maid, can I forget ?
In richest ore the brightest jewel set !
In thee high Heaven above was truest shown,
As by His noblest work the Godhead best is known.

In vain ye flaunt in summer's pride, ye groves !
Thou crystal streamlet with thy flowery shore,
Ye woodland choir that chaunt your idle loves,
Ye cease to charm : Eliza is no more.

Ye heathy wastes immix'd with reedy fens,
Ye mossy streams with sedge and rushes stor'd ;
Ye rugged cliffs o'erhanging dreary glens,
To you I fly : ye with my soul accord.

Princes whose cumbrous pride was all their worth,
Shall venal lays their pompous exit hail,
And thou, sweet Excellence ! forsake our earth,
And not a Muse with honest grief bewail ?

We saw thee shine in youth and beauty's pride,
And Virtue's light, that beams beyond the spheres;
But, like the sun eclips'd at morning tide,
Thou left us darkling in a world of tears.

The parent's heart that nestled fond in thee,
That heart now sunk, a prey to grief and care!
So deckt the woodbine sweet yon aged tree,
So, rudely ravish'd, left it bleak and bare.

I have proceeded no further.

Your kind letter, with your kind *remembrance* of your godson, came safe. The last, Madam, is scarcely what my pride can bear. As to the little fellow, he is, partiality apart, the finest boy I have of a long time seen. He is now seventeen months old, has the smallpox and measles over, has cut several teeth and yet never had a grain of doctor's drugs in his bowels.

I am truly happy to hear that the "little floweret" is blooming so fresh and fair, and that the "mother-plant" is rather recovering her drooping head. Soon and well may her "cruel wounds" be healed! I have written thus far with a good deal of difficulty. When I get a little abler you shall hear further from, Madam, Yours, R. B.

(1) Elizabeth Burnet, daughter of Lord Monboddo, whose acquaintance Burns made in Edinburgh in the winter of 1786. She died on 17th June, 1790, and as the poet told Cunningham, to whom on the 23rd January of this year he sent the first copy, he had been hammering at the elegy for several months. The elegy was published by Currie in 1800.

Burns allowed a couple of months to elapse before he wrote again. The presumption that he felt her reception of *Tam o' Shanter* so much as at least not

to be as kindly disposed to Mrs. Dunlop as usual is supported by the fact that this was not one of his inactive periods. On the contrary, he was unusually fertile of both letters and verse. He wrote at this time the "Lament for Mary Queen of Scots," "There'll never be peace till Jamie comes hame," the "Lament for James, Earl of Glencairn," etc., and corresponded with Mrs. Graham, Dr. Moore, Lady Elizabeth Cunningham, Alexander Cunningham, Mr. (afterwards Principal) Baird (about Michael Bruce's poems) and others. His second disabling fall, which he assigned as a reason for his silence, did not occur till the end of March.

*Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Ellisland,
near Dumfries.*

LOUDOUN CASTLE, 13th Feby. 1791.

I had last night yours, and though I shall ever be most sincerely interested in whatever concerns, pains, or pleases you, yet I have of late been witness or sharer in so many distresses of my friends where the heart was the part affected, that a broken bone or lacerated fibres, even when belonging to a son or a friend, hardly claim my attention. Don't think this unkind, for had I heard of your disaster from any one else I'm sure I should have felt very much alarmed and anxious about you. But when reported by your own hand, I just thought, as you say about the rhyming, that nobody would write me upon the rack; and so please myself in the thorough trust that the danger is past, and even the pain become supportable. I am only vexed to think your horse's feet may have suffered either in fact or reputation, as the one may be a future mean of injuring you

in purse, and the other in person — either of which would be disagreeable and inconvenient to you, and consequently regretted by me. Indeed, I must regret this very accident too, since you tell me it has deprived me of some letters which your little cousin only told me you had not time to write. You ask my opinion of the Elegy on Miss Burnet. I find one great fault with it, which is that it begins at the wrong end, so that it makes the ideas descend from Heaven down amongst the sedges ; but if you would consent to begin at “In vain,” etc. etc., and reading on to the end, place after it the eight first lines beginning “Life ne’er,” and ending with the word “known,” I think that would render it an exceedingly pretty thing, and substitute the climax for what to me seems to savour of the bathos in its present form. I like the notion of leaving the cheerful summer grove and flowery banks of the crystal stream, with their idle love songsters, to go mourn Eliza in the marshy moss or over-hanging cliffs of the dreary glens ; but some ladies to whom I read the next verse say ’t is too imitative of Shenstone’s cumbrous pride and pompous exit of princes. I have not his poems to look over, nor do I enough recollect them to give an opinion of the justice of this critic. The reflection itself seems to me naturally enough to flow from the theme without being prompted by any foreign remembrance whatever. The picture of youth, beauty and immortal virtues beaming beyond the spheres, till, eclipsed at morning tide, it leaves us darkling in a world of woes, is a tender preparative for the introduction of the father under the affecting image of the old stump stript of its sweet woodbine’s comfortable shade, and the subject, warming to a degree of enthusiasm, introduces the sublimer measure and devotional rapture of the first stanza — I think with

more propriety than at the first outset of the piece, besides giving the whole a more finished air than it had before. But all these notions may be quite foolish ; yet since they are mine, I freely submit them to your better judgment, and will be proud of myself should it sanction mine. If not, I shall honestly believe that I am wrong in what I have ventured to advance, even should you give no one reason in support of the contrary, but that, after once more reading it over, your taste still approves the original construction ; for, all compliment apart, the plain downright truth is that I have a much higher esteem for your taste than my own, although I am perfectly conscious I prefer my own to many a one whom the rest of the world deem wonderfully superior perhaps to both you and I. I think of leaving this at last on Thursday next, if nothing unlooked-for prevent me, after which address for Dunlop. I have been very little troublesome with my letters this great while. The sorrows of others has employed me, and if I have been perhaps less useless than formerly, I ought not to feel less happy. Yet I have been deprived of pleasures for which I have a strong relish. I have not been able to indulge myself in writing almost the only letters to which no duty calls me, but to which the hope of drawing answers makes me ever sit down with eagerness, and often to the neglect of others, for which I cannot properly account to myself, and far less to others ; for 't is an established maxim of mine that where we could be of material service to our fellow-creature, even were it an enemy (but I hope I am not so unfortunate as to have one myself), it would be criminal to waste the favourable moment in pleasing ourselves, trifling with a friend to whom we can be of little avail. Heaven and my good friend forgive the many deviations I have

made from this rule in behalf of the Ayrshire Bard, to whom I have often employed my pen when ten thousand reasons called for my doing it elsewhere. Yet he was so good as say my writing him frequently made him happier than he should otherwise have felt himself, and this one reason, supported by the pleasure it gave and the pride it inspired, overcame all the rest, and set me a-scribbling as if I had been paid by the sheet, or, like the blind fiddlers, to make me hold my tongue. But, before I do so, I must wish you joy of the one or two children I hear are just a-coming, and tell you I have had a visit of your brother, and shall think the better of Mr. Alexander for the rest of my life. I wish you would write me a character of your father and mother, that I may be able to guess what entitled them to the superiority their sons possess, or if it is only the accidental sport of nature — surprizing enough, it must be confessed, if it took place to such a degree in three instances in one family, which Mr. Burns told me, with the most persuasive appearance of integrity, the young man you lately lost could have been no exception from. — Adieu, Dr. Sir, your sincerely obliged and obedient humble sert.,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

*Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Ellisland,
near Dumfries.*

LOUDOUN CASTLE, 26th March 1791.

DR. BURNS,— After the time which has elapsed since I received yours I am sure you cannot imagine — indeed I dare say will not believe — how much I have wished to hear from you again, or how anxiously I have interrogated the post every day whether he was certain he had no letters for me, or how disappointed I felt when his answer was always the reiterated No. Yet I hoped every day to-morrow would

make me amends. To-morrow and to-morrow came and went, and left me as they found me, vext, uneasie, or angry ; for I am enough a woman to have been each by turns, nor do I coolly think any of these feelings wholly unreasonable. My friend tells me of illness, of writing with difficulty the first day he had held the pen, and adds that as soon as it became easier I should hear from him again. Should I believe him still ill, should I suppose he had forgot his word kindly and voluntarily pledged, or should I entertain a surmise that his inclination to write me required the spur of a promise to put it in motion ? Pride forbid ! for this would be the most painfully humiliating tenet of my creed, and if it is the case now, I would insist on your never putting yourself to one moment's disagreeable trouble on my account, since, spite of all the pleasure and self-complacency I feel in receiving your letters, and the long and unwearied pains I have been at to procure your correspondence, its value would instantly fall 100 per cent in my estimation the moment I became convinced you bestowed it with reluctance. To one so versant in Nature I need not tell how much it adds to the worth of every real or imaginary qualification of the head or heart to see it the property of one who possesses at the same time that peculiar faculty of the mind most suited to discover and properly, or rather partially, appreciate our merits, and receive with most grateful relish every mark of our kindness or esteem. Remove this darling distinction, and a Dryden or a Goldsmith might be as much to me as a Burns. I should half forget the qualities of the Bard who enchanted Joy Hare to such a degree as to exclaim on reading his works he made him pleased he was a man, glad he was a Scotsman ; but when he recollect ed they were wrot by an Ayrshire man, that

brought home matters and made him proud of his country and himself for belonging to it too. But I did not sit down to praise the poet, but to write the friend, by whom I beg to be remembered and relieved from a kind of anxiety really become painful from its continued length. Tell me you are perfectly well again, and I don't know but I might almost say those few words will give me as much pleasure as any or all you have ever wrot. But stop, I already retract, for should you be perfectly well, and have been so for any time, how should I satisfy myself as to the reasons of your long silence, unless you say, as others tell me for you, that you are busy preparing for the press the Tragedy of Sir John Wallace? Indeed, for a great while I honestly believed you busy, but it was in gathering in the publick rents — in plain prose calculations of cubic inches of wort, stands, or vulgar fractions of farthings, instead of buskin'd verse and immortal heroism, love and beauty — all which I suppose must have place in the modern drama. Though I am still here, where I have been held by an unaccountable fate much longer than was proper, I cannot tell how much longer it may last. Do, however, write me, if but a single line. Perhaps it may still find me here, though I cannot answer even for that. My uncertainty hitherto has kept me silent, but I have not patience to remain longer. So Mrs. Henri is talking of inoculating her son. She has now got pretty well, and has been twice or thrice in the fields of late. Alas! if Hygeia smiles, Fortune frowns most cruelly on her, and I know not how to leave her. Do let me beg a line, and if ever you would oblige me, grant the request. My best wishes attend Mrs. Burns, who I hear is about to bring you another son. Adieu! Say you are well and happy; 't will make me so.

Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Ellisland, Dumfries.

(*30th March 1791.*)

[Franked by Kerr : Edinr., Thirty-first March 1791.]

DR. BURNS,—Jenny Little is just returned from visiting her friends, and has brought me the disagreeable intelligence that you had had a third fall from your horse, and broke your arm.¹ This is very bad. Yet I would be glad to hear it were no worse. She tells me you could not lie down in bed, but was obliged to sit all night in your chair, and in very violent pain. Dare I believe in this case that the fracture is the only bad effects of the fall, and that you have not at same time received some contusion that may be of still more vexatious consequences? As it is the right arm, I cannot expect or even wish to receive a line from your own hand for a long long time ; but allow me to beg the favour of your desiring somebody about you to write me how you are, and what is the doctor's report at dressing the arm again, if he thinks the accident such as you have the probability of getting soon quit of, and whether the pain becomes so much easier as to admit your getting down your head, or at least to allow your resting quietly in your chair. Meanwhile, though I greatly applaud that strength of mind which enables one to surmount bodily pain to such a manly pitch of fortitude as to chat at seeming ease and tranquillity, as Jenny tells me you did, and entertain others with great kindness and good humour, yet I hope you will not push even this effort too far, and by talking too freely, or putting about the glass too briskly in gratitude to those friends who, I make no doubt, sympathy and goodwill may on such an occasion gather round you, the fever naturally attendant on broken bones acquire an additional force that may be very dangerous in its operation on one particularly hardly re-

covered from two previous disasters of a similar kind so lately happened and so troublesome. I must likewise insist on your promise, if providence is so kind as put it in your power again to hold the reins of a bridle, it shall not be in the head of the same unlucky animal that has already cost you so much. It is a poor bravado of courage for a man to break his neck, and an injustice to a family to risk the father's life and their bread, to save the price of a horse, although perhaps he was too dear a one, and he may be sorry to sell him at a wan-worth [for an old song]. Yet remember, my good friend, what Scripture says on another occasion — “what doth a man profit if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” What doth a man profit if he can gain twenty or even five and twenty guineas on the beast that costs him his office, his limbs, and his life? Think of all this, and dismiss Pegasus, if not for my sake, for that of Mrs. Burns and the children, who, they tell me, are the finest little creatures in the world, especially my little godson. But of this I suppose you are fully enough sensible already. But don't be too vain of them, for they will be spoilt in the town where I understand you are going in future to live, and made little impudent, pert things, with pampered constitutions, instead of the health, innocence, and bashful simplicity they would have retained at the farm — a line of life I always was partial to, but which I doubly esteem since I knew you and have been in company with your brother. But let me say no more on this head, since it is only praising the dead, and you have already, I fear, paid too dear for adhering to my ideas instead of your own. I trust if you can keep clear of temptation your own plan shall succeed better than mine. I rejoice as much as at present I can rejoice at the favourable turn of your Ex-

cise prospects, as Jenny tells me you are now a Supervisor.² I hope this is no poetical fancy of hers but plain prose truth. I believe that is £150 per annum. Some of our ladies say they would break both their arms and one of their legs for as much. I own I am not so wise or so stout, not even for my friends, for the joy of your promotion in no measure compensates to me for the misfortune that accompanies it, and I would rather you had remained a subaltern a year longer with whole bones as been made an East Indian Supervisor at the price they set, since in the same ratio it must have amounted to being brock upon the wheel. I wrot you yesterday morning by the west post when I had not the least surmise even in fancy of your situation. Forgive what I then said in favours of that full confidence in your goodness to me that leads me to hope hearing from me even in your present uneasie state may give you some satisfaction. I have therefore set up when every one else is in bed to scribble something, no matter what. If it can for a moment suspend the sense of pain and the tedium of confinement, I shall think I have been better employed than even in sleep, though I frequently alledge that is the sweetest enjoyment of my life and the most valuable part of my existence. Don't laugh, for it would be worth my while to live, at least to breathe, for the sake of my family, although I were never to awaken, and this very consideration has often a good effect in reconciling me to this world in the very moment of its most heartrending crosses and vexations. Is not this being very philosophical? Yet I am not asleep to the female spirit of curiosity. Indeed, I profess always feeling it in what concerns my few friends, if the interest I take in their happiness can be called by so degrading a name. But call it what you will, only satisfy it by inform-

ing me if you are really a Supervisor, and where and by whose means I will in return send you some lines I wrot the other day inviting a young beautiful woman I was very fond of to come here and see me. I don't say who it really was, but the name led it to be believed a daughter of Mr. Lawrie's, a very good but not a very handsome girl. I shall also, if time serve, transcribe you the last thing Jenny Little composed, as I hope it may afford you some amusement. It is address to a poor half-witted creature that lives at the coal-pit here, and mentions a poor old man who was in Portugal with John, Earl of Loudoun, and is pensioned by the little countess.

POEM ON CONTENT INSCRIBED TO MY GOOD FRIEND
JANNET NICOLE BY JANNOT LITTLE

O Jennet, by your kind permission,
My Muse in tatter'd low condition
Would fain attempt, if you'll allow,
To dedicate a Song to you.

Jennet, farewell, you 've lint and tow,
O keep your toke well frae the low; head-dress, flame
While turmoils torture Land and Sea
Content may smoke a pipe with thee.

LOUDOUN CASTLE, *Monday.*

My hand is so cramp't I can hardly say farewell, but must beg to hear from you. Indeed, I shall be quite uneasy till you cause some one assure me the danger is past, and your arm promises to serve its master as before.—Adieu, Dr. Sir, your obliged and obedient humble sert.,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Jenny Little was waiting at Ellisland to see Burns when he came home with his arm broken. She described the scene in verse.

(2) Burns had for some time entertained hopes of rapid promotion. In the August of the preceding year Nicol had believed that he was already an examiner. As a matter of fact he was, on 27th January 1791, merely placed on the "Register of Persons put on the list for examiners and supervisors," and it seems he had by this time concluded the arrangement by which he was to get a foot-walk at Dumfries, giving up his farm.

Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Ellisland,
near Dumfries.

LOUDOUN CASTLE, 6th April 1791.

MY DR. SIR,—Spite of your not letting me hear, I endeavour not to believe you continue so ill, or are prevented by a fever from being able to acquiesce with my request of desiring some one of the servants in the house or any body else that chance threw in the way to let me hear of your health and prospect of recovery. I will not say what pains your not doing this gives me; only I am sure, could you guess at it, you would regret your silence, and be instant to relieve the anxiety I should have felt for any degree of suffering or danger of the Bard, even before you had honoured me with the kind attentions I have for years past received with so much pleasure and gratitude from one whose genius without any other advantage would have ensured my admiration, and whose talents and goodness of heart required not the aid of harmonic numbers or varied imagination to command my esteem. To be able to hold

a place in yours has and ever will be one of the most earnest wishes of my heart, and to know you are as well and happy as this world can make you one of my sincerest pleasures, as at this moment the dread of your being otherwise is truly distressing, and hangs about me spite of all my efforts to the contrary. The direfull accident must undoubtedly confine you for some time, and the accounts I got of it was melancholy and alarming. Yet I always persuaded myself hitherto that I should have a line telling me you were easier, and had escaped any apparent threatenings of worse consequences than the fracture itself. Now I am no longer able to lull my apprehensions to rest ; on the contrary they keep me awake, and when I sleep I dream of the Major and you fencing with the poor broken stumps, and the ends of the bones coming through the flesh and piercing out both your eyes. I waked with a scream, and my own eyes not quite dry on the occasion. It was, it must be confessed, a most horrible sight, and might have drawn both cries and tears although the combatants had been far more indifferent than either a son or a friend. How happy should I have been when I awoke and behold ! it was a dream ; but alas ! what a dismal vision did waking fancy present as what might very possibly be the real present situation of one of the parties, and perhaps the cause of my not being favoured with the line I had begged and so earnestly wished to get. Sure you don't regard me as so much your friend as I really am, or you would not leave me to fancy you very ill, your wife alarmed, in a state unfit to stand a fright, and perhaps your tenderest affections hurt with a still more cruel wound than the fall had been able to inflict. Fate has of late persecuted some of those I love so much that I have learnt to fear for all. There is even a possibility you may

not have got the large packet I sent a few days ago with a view to amuse your convalescent hours, as I hear my friend Willie Kerr is far from well ; he may have neglected to send my letter. This idea pleases, and for once in my life I am able to draw a pleasurable sensation from the knowledge of the indisposition of one of the worthiest and best of men, and, what to me, I confess, is still more, one of the few people on earth that I do believe thinks almost as well of me as all the world that know any thing of the matter agrees to do of himself. I send this the other road, and will make you pay for it, since you don't chuse write. Adress still here, where I am to remain on account of the proposed inoculation of the sweet little flow'ret, whose name is James, and who increases in grace and stature and in favour, I hope, with God and man. Heaven grant success to this critical operation, on which the mother's heart, life, and future peace seems to hang. Poor thing ! She is wonderfully pluckt up within this few days. I tremble lest it should prove a blink before a storm. The squally blasts have beat too bitterly on her already. Would to God the winter of her days may be past. Though some body or other says life knows no return of the spring, yet I think this is sometimes a mistake. I ought even myself to acknowledge with gratitude that I have felt it so. How very different is my health and spirits from what they were that year you published your works to Scotland and to me. Had they not, how should I have lived amid the scenes to which I have been last season witness, and where I was the sole person to lend that comfort and support I had so lately stood so much in need of ? I have sure been indowed with strength beyond my own. Would it were also allowed me to cast a gleam of joy round the couch of

your distress, and I would esteem myself the more for it all the days of my after existence. Yet after all it would be but paying my debt — a debt I doubt I must for ever lie under, unless you will be satisfied with reading the inspirations of the sincerest regard and goodwill instead of those of the Muses. Were your ear as bad as mine, the voice of friendship would afford it sweeter sounds than the music of Gluck, or de Kain(?), Johnie Riddle or M'Laughlan.¹ Providence kindly makes time, age and years an opiate that lulls the memory of past sorrows. But alas ! how dim a curtain they draw between past and present joys. Your hand has struck perhaps the last notes I may ever strongly relish. Habitual gratitude, should the powers of memory be extinguished, will make me from former custom bless the name of Burns, I think, while I live, and I flatter myself you have hit on at last one kind method to make you all your life warmly interested in that of Francis Wallace. When you have read this, give a kiss to my little godson, and desire some one instantly to tell me how his father and mother is, if you believe I have any reason but some silly vanity in the correspondence of a poet for writing. Were this the case, it might be despicable or punishable by others, not by you, to whose self-love it ought still to be a sort of compliment. Farewell. May I receive the news I wish from Ellisland, and be able to make a suitable return from this. But, good or bad, I beg you may no longer withhold them. To know the worst is so far a melancholy comfort, as to tell it is always a mark of kind remembrance, and remembrance never pleases us more than when we have reason to believe most part of the world for a time forgotten. Adieu.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

This day Mrs. Henri inoculates her child, and embarks her all on one bottom. God be a Father to the fatherless and the widow's comfort and support in this arduous trial!

(1) John Riddell of Glengarnock, Ayrshire (1718-95), composer of reels and strathspeys; he wrote the air for Burns's "Fate gave the word, the arrow sped" in Johnson's *Museum*, and was dubbed by the poet in his note thereon "that bard-born genius." M'Laughlan is probably John M'Laughlan (*circa* 1740-91), composer and writer about music.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, 11th April 1791.

I am once more able, my honoured friend, to return you, with my own hand, thanks for the many instances of your friendship, and particularly for your kind anxiety in this last disaster that my evil genius had in store for me. However, life is chequered — joy and sorrow — for on Saturday morning last Mrs. Burns made me the present of a fine boy,¹ rather stouter, but not so handsome as your godson was at his time of life. Indeed, I look on your little namesake to be my *chef à œuvre* in that species of manufacture, as I look on *Tam o' Shanter* to be my standard performance in the poetical line. "Tis true, both the one and the other discover a spice of roguish waggery that might perhaps be as well spared; but then they also show, in my opinion, a force of genius and a finishing polish that I despair of ever excelling. Mrs. Burns is getting stout again, and laid as lustily about her to-day at breakfast as a reaper from the corn-ridge. That is the peculiar privilege

and blessing of our hale, sprightly damsels that are bred among the *hay and heather*. We cannot hope for that highly-polished mind, that charming delicacy of soul, which is found among the female world in the more elevated stations of life, and which is certainly by far the most bewitching charm in the famous cestus of Venus. It is indeed such an inestimable treasure, that where it can be had in its native heavenly purity, unstained by someone or other of the many shades of affectation and unalloyed by some one or other of the many species of caprice, I declare to Heaven I should think it cheaply purchased at the expense of every other earthly good ! But as this angelic creature is, I am afraid, extremely rare in any station and rank of life, and totally denied to such an humble one as mine, we meaner mortals must put up with the next rank of female excellence — as fine a figure and face we can produce as any rank of life whatever ; rustic, native grace ; unaffected modesty and unsullied purity ; nature's mother-wit and the rudiments of taste ; a simplicity of soul, unsuspecting of, because unacquainted with, the crooked ways of a selfish, interested, disingenuous world ; and the dearest charm of all the rest, a yielding sweetness of disposition and a generous warmth of heart, grateful for love on our part and ardently glowing with a more than equal return : these, with a healthy frame, a sound, vigorous constitution, which your higher ranks can scarcely ever hope to enjoy, are the charms of lovely woman in my humble walk of life.

This is the greatest effort my broken arm has yet made. Do let me hear, by first post, how *cher petit Monsieur* comes on with his small-pox. May Almighty goodness preserve and restore him !

R. B.

P. S.— In a letter I had lately from Dr. Moore, he bids me to remember him to you and to beg of you not to think that his friendship flags when his pen lies still. He says, except on business, he now seldom lifts a pen at all. But this is from myself: the devil take such apathy of Friendship ! ! !

R. B.

(1) William Nicol, born 9th April 1791.

Ad. Mr. ROBERT BURNS, Ellisland, Dumfries.

LOUDON CASTLE, 30th April 1791.

[Franked by Kerr : Edinr., Second May 1791.]

DR. SIR,— I should have had still more pleasure in receiving your last, had it not been preceded by one from your brother, who forestalled all your good news. Uneasie at having no return to two letters I had wrot to enquire about your broken arm and your surmised promotion, both of which truly interested me, and afraid you had grown worse, I took the liberty of applying to him for that information you did not favour me with, never considering that —

When a poet's bones are broke in twain,
The airy substance soon unites again,

as I am now happy to understand it has done in the present case, tho' you left me too long ruminating on a situation to which my fancy did not give so agreeable a termination. I have endeavoured to take my revenge, but I doubt you are beyond my power. Your wishes to hear of *le cher Monsieur* will not be so irksome as mine were, if for no other reason but that a woman's curiosity is always more intense on every subject than a man's, and a man perhaps a more important subject than a man-child, which last you have now indeed likewise thrown into the bargain, as well as Mrs. Burns's breakfast, which did me almost as much good as

if I had eat it myself ; and I sincerely congratulate her and you, not only on the increase of your family, but still more on the charming picture you draw so many years after wedlock of the rural fair. Indeed, I believed all my life that those who were in what you call the humble walk had their lines in the most pleasant places. Not that I agree with you in believing either caprice or affectation can only perch on the topmost branches of the tree of life. On the contrary, I have seen them frequently build on the very ground, and there rear a numerous offspring, almost as luxuriant as were to be found any where else. But while I cannot permit you to appropriate those harpies who destroy female perfection allenerly [only] to the superiour goddesses, I fear the ladies must also resign the most bewitching charm of the cestus of Venus. The real refinement and delicacy of a woman's mind is certainly independent of all education, and, like a genius for poetry, fire from Heaven falling on the embryo on its first existence. In short, the said cestus may just as well be wove on the herd's loom of Shetland wool as formed of the materials of an Indian shawl, and tinged in Tyrian Royal purple. The true value is the warmth of kindness, the whiteness of innocence and softness of peace and simplicity, which every effort of improvement tends to spoil. Sterne's illustration of the smooth shillings applies fully to our sex ; for if any little asperities are rubbed off by art, every one is taking from the original value of the silver, only to give a shine it is not a bit the better for, while the loss is undisputable. Now, are you not accusing me of affectation in imitating your faults, since I cannot attain your singularities of another denomination? I have neglected your 'kind request of writing as you did mine. I am writing and not telling you

a word of what you asked, just as you did to me, and if you are angry at this, it will be imitating me as much as is consistent with your sex, who are always angry when we are only vexed and uneasie, and alarmed for the safety and welfare of those friends who perhaps had only forgot as for a little. Your brother's answer was brought me sitting at table. It contained every information, and answered every word of mine. For the first time of my life I toasted a Nabob. I involuntarily lifted my glass and drank Mr. Alexander, whose opinions had acquired a new value in my estimation from the three or four lines I had just read, for which I beg you may return my thanks. Tell me, too, if you can — or if ever you mean to tell me any thing I ask — why I am not better pleased with this card than with a letter ending with a line which I must quote for sake of the author, as you once said, “The devil take all such apathy of friendship?” *Nota bene.* This is sacrilegious against friendship and the sin against the Holy Ghost in my sight, since it is applied to the steadiest friend and the worthiest, most warm-hearted man with whom I was ever acquainted, by whose acquaintance I have gained more advantages in the improvement of my morals, the pleasures of my mind, and the interests of my family than from any other connection I ever was able to form in the course of near forty years that I have been happy in believing I held a place in his good will some thing equivalent to the esteem I must always feel for him. Though I regret his not writing, I cannot resent it, nor am entitled to complain of what I have so much deserved from all the world except one, whom I have perhaps sometimes rather persecuted too much with an insipid correspondence, to which good-nature has led him to submit till I have learnt to

consider his letters as a due to which I have an unextinguishable right. But I must, before I end, tell you the little floweret has been twice inoculated; in consequence has had three small-pox, cut one tooth, and got well again. His mother once more stout and well, and able to look after her household; so that I shall leave her in two days or three to go home, where any letter you may write will, I think, now find me, as I hope this will do you in health yourself, and all around you; though in the meantime I, who, for ten months wandering from sick room to sick room, have seemed to glean up the health every one had lost, have now got as much rheumatism as has kept me in bad humour all yesterday and in bed all this forenoon; or perhaps you had not got off with the single sheet, tho' I am now quite well and brought into temper by the hopes of seeing my son John and his wife when I go home, and some far less agreeable intelligence from France, India, and England, upon which I must chew the cud as quietly as I can, comforting myself that I have not the second sight. And perhaps Providence means to bless me in the very circumstances which at present twitch me as sharply as the rheumatism. Thank God! I have not seen my son James's name in the list of news-paper killed or wounded,¹ or read any bad fate attending the Mermaid from Canton in China. My health is restored, and the Bard willing to exert the first strength of his arm to promote my happiness. I feel all these blessings and am truly grateful. Farewell. Dr. Burns, write! Your letters always, whatever you omit, still delight and oblige

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

What did you think of Jenny Little on sight? She was much pleased with your polite attention and kind offer.

(1) Probably the first brush (14th September 1790) in the campaign against Tippoo Sultaun, in which Colonel Floyd lost 436 killed and wounded. As Abercromby was not yet engaged, Mrs. Dunlop's fears for her son were quite groundless (see page 189). The Mermaid was Anthony's ship.

To MRS. DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, May 1791.¹

Many thanks to you, Madam, for your good news respecting the little floweret and the mother-plant. I hope my poetic prayers have been heard and will be answered up to the warmest sincerity of their fullest extent; and then Mrs. Henri will find her little darling the representative of his late parent, in every thing but his abridged existence.

I have just finished the following song which, to a lady the descendant of Wallace and many heroes of his truly illustrious line, and herself the mother of several soldiers, needs neither preface nor apology.

Scene — A Field of Battle. *Time of the day* — Evening. The wounded and dying of the victorious army are supposed to join in the following:

SONG OF DEATH²

AIR — *Oran an Aoig*

Farewell, thou fair day, thou green earth and ye skies,
Now gay with the broad-setting sun!

Farewell, loves and friendships, ye dear, tender ties!
Our race of existence is run.

Thou grim king of terrors, thou life's gloomy foe,
Go, frighten the coward and slave!

Go, teach them to tremble, fell tyrant! but know
No terrors hast thou to the Brave!

Thou strik'st the dull peasant, he sinks in the dark,
Nor saves e'en the wreck of a name;

Thou strik'st the young hero, a glorious mark!
He falls in the blaze of his fame.

In the field of proud Honor, our swords in our hands,
Our king and our country to save,
When victory shines on life's last ebbing sands,
O! who would not die with the Brave!

The circumstance that gave rise to the foregoing verses was — looking over with a musical friend M'Donald's collection of Highland airs, I was struck with one, an Isle of Skye tune, entitled "Oran an Aoig," or "The Song of Death," to the measure of which I have adapted my stanzas. I have of late composed two or three other little pieces which, ere yon full-orbed moon, whose broad impudent face now stares at old Mother Earth all night, shall have shrunk into a modest crescent, just peeping forth at dewy dawn, I shall find an hour to transcribe for you. *A Dieu je vous commande!* R. B.

(1) Currie dated this letter "Ellisland, 17th December 1791," which was an obvious mistake, as Burns had by that time left Ellisland for Dumfries. Subsequent editors, however, in correcting him, also fell into error; Chambers dated the letter from Dumfries. Internal evidence and the context here supplied prove that it was written at Ellisland, but in May, not December, of 1791, thus confirming the tradition that "The Song of Death" was one of Burns's last poetical efforts before leaving his farm. Note Mrs. Dunlop's favourable report on Mrs. and Master Henri in her letter of the 30th April, Burns's above allusion to the news, and Mrs. Dunlop's mention of "The Song of Death" on 3rd May.

(2) No. 385 in the fourth volume of Johnson's *Museum*.

Mrs. Dunlop dated her previous letter, "Loudon Castle, 30th April," and it was franked at Edinburgh 2nd May. In it she said, "I shall leave in two days, or three, to go home." She dated the following letter "Dunlop, 3d May." This is evidently a mistake, for it begins: "I have been home three weeks." The

letter contains six closely written quarto pages. On the fifth page she wrote: "This is the last day of May. I thought of you all the twentieth." On the last page she concludes: "I am obliged to stop this letter which has taken me a week to scribble." It is probable that Mrs. Dunlop *began* the letter on 23rd May.

*Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Ellisland,
near Dumfries.*

DUNLOP, 3d [probably 23d] May 1791.

MY DR. SIR,—I have been at home three weeks, the first of which I spent in bed from a severe cold and a visit of my frequent guest, the rose in my face. Since I have got better I have had a much more welcome visit from my son John and his wife, who with their third boy are still with us. The night I wrote you last I was somehow overwhelmed with something unaccountable, like the presentiment of evil, which dwelt on my spirits spite of every effort I could make to the contrary. I believed it suggested by the thoughts of parting from my daughter and her little one, perhaps for ever, as she had positively said she durst not come to bid adieu to her paternal abode, and I was dubious about the propriety of returning to sharpen the parting pang by another separation for her from a mother who could ill set her a right example of that fortitude her unfortunate situation requires, and whose mind and constitution were both exhausted by the past eleven months' endeavour to keep up those about her. Next day brought me the accounts of the death of one of the first, and alas! one of the last of my early friends, one with whom I begun to be very intimately acquainted, just, I believe, about the time your grandfather and grandmother would be married, and with whom the ties of friendship has never been broken till now that death has cut the Gordian knot and robbed me, I dare say, of the

person on earth that prized me most above the real value. I had been so fortunate as to meet some opportunities of shewing my affection to his family, and the warm influence of an affectionate disposition and an honest, grateful heart, joined to a luxuriant imagination, led him from that moment to regard me as something superexcellent, to which he or his could never be too much devoted. He is now escaped from a world of woe, and I am weak enough to regret it to a degree of folly that is neither expressible nor excusable. I have not indeed wept over his corse, but I have ruminated over the thousand tender circumstances that were, I may almost say, strewed over the whole space between the cradle and the grave, through the happiness and misery of threescore years, till I have lost half the flesh I had a month ago. It is indeed true I am rather the better as the worse of this, since I had enough and more than enough to spare, for I am never well when I look too like being so, and shall be probably freer of complaints now that I am grown very thin, if one can profit by any change which takes its rise from thoughtlessness, the greatest enemy of human happiness, and ever fitted to put us in tune to sing your "Song of Death" rather than to enjoy life. But, instead of murmuring, I ought to tell you I have heard of my sons in the Indies—James safe from battle and Anton returned to Bombay with a ship named the Racer, which he commands in the country trade, and which he has been so fortunate as to bring in from China the first vessel of the season, and was just ready to set sail again for Bengal about Christmas last. Poor fellow ! May Providence and fortune soon enable him to shift his sails, and stand for Britain, there to spend his future in happiness and undiminished worth of heart. If I should not live to see this, I will hope it may be a part of

my Heaven to view it from a more exalted station, perhaps even to look over the congratulatory stanzas my friend may honour him with on that occasion, in which, should there escape him some kind allusion to the days of former years, I have not ideas for celestial scenes if it would not brighten their surface. As a poet you ought to be able more than others to read the human heart, and to discover something I cannot describe which at present presides in mine. I believe local circumstances govern my thoughts more than any body's upon earth. It is now years since I left the room I had inhabited for forty years before, with intention to have the painting washed over and to return to it in a week or two. Afterwards I took that violent fever, in the recovery of which I first was so fortunate as to meet your "*Cotter's Saturday Night*" — an event to which I have since owed inestimable pleasure, and for which I shall ever retain the sincerest gratitude to that power which endowed the author with capacity to write and Miss Betty M'Adam with taste to hand me his works at a time when nothing less powerful could have animated or interested me. Unforeseen circumstances, added to an inward weakness of mind, has ever since procrastinated my return to my former apartment. I have just now resumed it, and with it all the awakened sense of every advantage I have for ever lost. Time, which softens sorrow, and blunts the keen edge of our passions, increases the weight, and makes us daily more sensible of the value of those numberless advantages which the attachment of respectable, warm, and steady friends adds to our consequence, comfort, and happiness. The tears that flow for a husband or a father's worth and affection burst a thousand new channels for themselves, besides the tide of fondness that at first overwhelms the soul, and as cool reason

feels the force of those more than those they wear deeper in proportion as the other subsides, tho' this is not so amiable a distress, and will meet less sympathy, it is mixt with gall and aconite that nobody knows who has not tasted the helpless, unprotected state of womanhood, or has forgot that of childhood, torn from the nursing love and tenderness by which it was in use to be guarded, cherished, and protected. Forgive me, I cannot repeat what wrings these reflections from me at this moment. 'T is sufficient apology for uttering them to say that it helps to sweeten their bitterness to myself, and is the only method by which I shall endeavour to effect that end. Thus,

When dark shades fly o'er th' uneven ground,
Thick clouds grow thinner in their airy round.

This, I think, Dr. Burns, was what I once told you I persuaded myself I should find a great advantage of writing to a Bard, supposing I should ever meet one just of the character I had perhaps a little poetically figured out a poet to my imagination. Imagination still persuades me I have discovered one who realizes the fairy fiction, and if I am mistaken, I hope I shall never find out my error, since the illusion furnishes me a self-indulgence and satisfaction nothing else could replace. I shall long to see the pieces you promise me, but I need not tell you how much I long for every line from you ; I believe, though, more for your letters than even your verses. The last are for the world, the first for myself, and therefore are considered, as the writers say *a precio affectionis*, with the redoubled value of a hidden treasure. By the by, I wish you would write on one size of paper, that I might lay the leaves like a book, and at once turn up the favourite idea of the minute,

like a text of Scripture, for the solace of afflicted piety. I have sometimes thought of having your letters all transcribed for this very purpose, but my hand is not so glib as it has been to do it myself, and I cannot resolve to resign that pleasure to another on which I have so often and so sweetly feasted ; when a mind palled and disgusted with nine-tenths of the world, felt no relish for almost any other banquet. Meanwhile, I admire the good nature that makes you appear still pleased with mine, and good enough to answer them. At least write me now and then, for I can hardly indeed say you often answer the very questions to which I most earnestly wish a reply. Yet, spite of that, I never feel disappointed in reading what you are pleased to substitute in place of that reply, had I even asked if it was true that you were composing a tragedy on a subject in which I was much interested upon other accounts as well as the fame of the author. This is the last day of May. I thought of you all the twentieth, and found a new reason to regret the motives that had led you to quit your farm. The farmer of Ellisland had sometimes cattle to buy at the Fair here, and I always amused myself with remembering the possibility that I might be at home when he visited this neighbourhood. Consequently the first Sunday of that month, when the Church of Ayr used to be decorated with flowers for the reception of the Judges, did not present a more gay holiday to my childish hope than the Dunlop-kirk races, which might be attended and celebrated by the presence of the Scots Bard on the twentieth — a circumstance which raised them in my estimation as much above the Olympick Games as a live dog is above a dead lion. For whatever I may think, I dare not wound your modesty by saying as much as Burns pleases me more than Homer.

I meant this letter for a single one, and trust you would not grudge a groat to hear of me, but it has insensibly swelled to a second sheet, and I am ashamed it should cost you eight pence; nor can I at present send it otherwise. Yet I have been so long of writing—I mean so much longer than ordinary—that if you think of me at all, you must fancy some reason, perhaps believe me so capricious as to be offended, however foolishly, with something you said; in which case I am sure I would appear too unreasonable to escape contempt. Nor can I submit to the very shadow of this from you for a single moment. No, my good friend, I would rather make you pay a crown than run the least risque of it by a silence that would cost me much more than even my dearest letter can do you, since I value your esteem more than I suppose the disinterested spirit of the Bard would do any crown whatever, if it was not a crown of glory, and that I hope you have a long, long, long race to run before you attain in any other way but from the hand of Coila. My son John and his wife insist I shall this day go with them to Loudoun, from whence we return on Monday. I am therefore obliged to stop this letter, which, however little you may prize it, has taken me a week to scribble amid a thousand interruptions, so that, like old Hunter,¹ the Minister of Ayr, with his sermons and poems—for he too was a poet—I had not time to make it shorter; but I am half resolved for the future never to give you more than one sitting at a time, which will be good both for saving your purse and your eyes, and consequently claim your grateful thanks, though you know I have often alledged you had a knack for the last yourself by only reading on half of what I wrot. I am informed by a long letter from Mr. Moore and another from herself that my daughter

Mrs. Vans and her family are come to England and settled at Exeter. I have not yet answered either of these letters, nor indeed could I, being so busie with this little, short, cheap, necessary note to you. You see, my friend, what rational, consistent creatures women, at least ladies, are. I believe in my conscience nothing on earth equals them, except men, and these men to be as extraordinary must be either fools, philosophers, or poets. Adieu! Tell me how you find your elbow; what hope of promotion; if the little one drinks as well as its mother eats; and if you are writing a tragedy on Wallace Wight for a plaything to my little godson and a pleasure to Dr. Sir, yours,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) See vol. i, p. 151.

During this summer Creech wrote Burns proposing a third edition of the poems. Burns told Hill in the letter printed in *Chambers*, vol. iii. p. 260, that he had as yet taken no notice of the communication; but apparently he had consulted Mrs. Dunlop as to the contents. The edition did not of course appear till 1793.

It is not probable that there are any missing letters at this point. Burns was at Kilmarnock on 21st June at his brother's marriage, and, as will be seen from the following letter, called at Dunlop House on the occasion.

To BURNS.

DUNLOP, 12th July 1791.

DEAR SIR,— You bid me give you my opinion with regard to your Psalms and Prayers. As these ought surely to be

the most sacred part of one's works, or at least of their words, I take it for granted this request of my friend includes an unrestrained privilege to speak my mind likewise of all or any part of the rest, and that you renounce all right to be offended with my doing so. I shall therefore proceed to investigate your faults as I would wish to do my own, with a view to their amendment before they were to pass in final judgment before the great tribunal and the assembled world. I shall, like the prophets of old, cry to you aloud, and although, like them too, I must suffer a good deal myself in the execution of my office, perhaps you may be deaf like the unrepenting Jews, and like them doomed to the second death for stiffneckedly supporting errors to which a mind formed with a most uncommon share of native sensibility and delicacy cannot be blind, whatever some ill-grounded pride may make him pretend. Now, if this motive or some idea of interest forbids a man's retracting any one word he has once uttered, the fourth edition ought to be an exact copy of the third. If, on the contrary, it is not considered as degrading to that all-perfect being, a poet, to overhaul his writings, and expunge a good sentiment which his heart still avows, because it might have been more sublimely express, it is certainly beneath him to ratify by repetition a mean phrase to which no sentiment is attached, or a sentiment which would disgrace any expression, or an idea that outrages decency and confounds modesty. If then it is allowed you, my dr. Sir, without seeming to be persuaded by your friends, like poor Dr. M'Gill,¹ to read your recantation, to obliterate whole pages free from any striking fault, and not wholly destitute of beauties, why be more scrupulous of giving what it is impossible you should defend, passages that it is next to

impossible for me even to arraign, which I blush to mention, and cannot recall to your remembrance without injuring myself in your esteem? As a lady I would feel a degrading impropriety should you find me riddling my own ashes; as a woman I feel still more uneasie from a consciousness of the task I have undertaken, the most difficult friendship could appoint me. Nor could any less powerful motive prompt me to repeat to any man alive that I had read lines which I have so often wished to blot out as a foul stain upon the paper which presented them to the world, and, what was worse, to my own eye, as evincing a flaw in the mind of a friend I liked and admired beyond most I had ever met in the course of so long a life, whose distinguishing goodness to me has been one of the greatest satisfactions of my latter days, is my pride, but is by those very lines precluded from being my boast, without subjecting myself to a degree of ridicule none of my sex ought to have courage for meeting. Indeed, dr. Burns, you must forgive me telling you how oft I have felt the mortifying truth that no lady could be justified in acknowledging that your book, spite of the many unspeakable advantages it possesses, had been a mean of recommending its author to her acquaintance or esteem while it contains six stanzas to be found in the Edinburgh edition at pages 26, 39, 97, 256, 283. Nay more, if you abstract the Psalms and Prayers, and insert these in a new corrected version, I will not be able to vindicate to my own heart that intimacy it has been so long my highest ambition and most unwearied endeavour to establish. In my opinion, you have no alternative but to print just as it stands, or make a thorough reformation such as may become the refinements expected from the last five or six years, more extensive acquaintance with polite scenes,

polite authors, and those female companies to which your own merit has introduced you, and which, if you regard them, ought to set you above the little affectations of vice or ribaldry that are allowable in none, but contemptible in those who know better things, and are equal to the very best. If you are not too angry already, allow me, my Dr. Sir, to add one remark more. There are some words which, although in themselves perfectly innocent, when uttered in the rustic simplicity of a peasant, custom has wholly prescribed in upper life, so that an author should have some very strong temptation before he introduce what it would be an insult to his company for a gentleman to read aloud. Now, whether that temptation subsists where you describe a dog sitting in the only way a dog could sit, or rather two dogs sitting as they could not possibly sit, both on one tail, I submit to your own opinion. Mine would have led me rather to fix the place where than the manner how, as capable of more variety. Would it hurt the spirit of the piece much had it only been

Till tir'd at last wi' mony a race,
They sat them down on a brae face,—

or

They sat down by a quarry face.

Next time the same crambo occurs I would humbly propose to exchange the verses to chimes, and they should rattle in their ranks rare reeling rhymes or ranting rhymes. In the third introduction of this unfortunate word which happened to be hooted out of good company spite of all your favour for it, I must confess it seems to add to the ludicrous distress represented, and therefore have some title to keep its place, especially if, by being single, it does not throw that reflection of poverty of language ready to

be levelled at all repetitions even of the best chosen words where they return frequently and tire the ear before it has forgot the jingle of the last page. Besides all this, I must still add that I will think it an improvement on the volume if you exchange "The Ordination" and "Calf" for "Tam o' Shanter" and "Queen Mary's Lament." Only, I am not quite certain if the polish you so much boast as your master stroke may not be a little tarnished by the sweat and smoke of one line which I felt rather a little too strong for me. I believe I told you once before that my friend the Doctor thought broad Scots, though very proper for Queen Mary to speak while she lived, not majestic enough for her to sing so long after she was dead. You see I do not always harp on one string. After dwelling with daily increasing delight on the innumerable beauties which crowd almost every page, and in some go infinite degrees beyond my poor talents for applause, where, as Addison, I think it is, says "Eternity would be too short to utter all their praise"—I have spent almost a week picking holes where I have so oft been enchanted with irresistible charms. Perhaps you may alledge I am put out of humour with the holes in my own work that makes me fall foul of yours in this harsh manner; for I have done nothing but darned old sheets and table-cloths this two months, and the longer I sit, one would think found still the more to do—a thing very trying for that weak share of patience we poor females are endowed with; and your friend the Major would say a married man must know we are sometimes a little apt to vent our spleen at whatever comes in our way when things will not go just as we would have them. And, by the by, did you not second some maxims of that nature the other day more cordially than we could

have expected from such a sworn friend of our sex. But I see none of you are to be trusted in bad company. Were I Mrs. Burns, I would as lief send you among a gang of thieves as into a knot of old batchelors, for I know no one affectation on earth so catching, or where one is so ready to forget they are not perfectly in earnest, as that of running down the women on all occasions; nor is there any course where one more frequently outruns both their happiness and respectability before they are aware of the consequence of uttering such counterfeit coin as never came from the mint of a poetic head or heart, where all bears the stamp of generosity, kindness, and unbounded love. Tell me, my good friend, am I not right? Are not these the very distinguishing characteristics of those favourites of the Muses, or have I stole as much of their enthusiasm as to figure to imagination something more sublime than the works of their Creator. Convince me that one poet is devoid of the bright warm glow of sympathetic tenderness for all that's fair and good, and is not even frequently given to mark those attributes where others miss them, and I shall be at least decidedly cured of ever believing the character of the man essentially necessary to the excellence of the poet — an error, if it really is one, in which my acquaintance with you has hitherto proved to confirm, instead of correcting my former opinions. Sixty-one years' experience of the world and all its deceptions have not yet taught me to separate the author entirely from his page, nor, while I read a letter a certain Bard wrote on the 11th of April, can I forbear persuading myself that I look through the very heart and soul of the writer, and acknowledging that in this instance at least God has not made his work for man to mend or for women to

discover a fault in—a thing I fancy you begin to think one woman of your acquaintance is singularly fond of; whether you think she is qualified for it or not is another story. However, there was one fault of yours of which I have not yet said one word, that displeases me a great deal, and which I would have had great pleasure in being able to prevent. Indeed, I did what I could, and have ever since regretted my want of success. That was your obstinacy in leaving us the day I saw you last. I was almost sorry for your brother's good luck—the greatest a man could have—since you tell me he is blest both in love and fortune. But his wedding² took you from us too soon. You will tell me I am neither just nor generous, since I can grudge the most material good to another at the expense of losing an agreeable afternoon visit myself, and forget that it was to that very wedding I owed seeing you at all, for which I ought sincerely and thankfully to give it my blessing, and wish them joy, as I really do with all my heart. I hope she is young and handsome, and deserves him. I durst not ask you before the company, for you said so much of his fondness for her, which I should otherwise have believed a matter of course, as to make me afraid she was only rich, and perhaps but homely or old—which might make one overact their part, the only thing which I could believe would incline you to lampoon a man's affection for the woman he married, although that man had not been a brother, and such a brother as he seems to be. For in those who appear suited to meet the most ample return, no degree of attachment ought to be held ridiculous. I should, on the contrary, have expected, had you stayed here that evening, to hear you repeat their Epithalamium in that divine spirit which created the milkwhite

hawthorn in "The Cotter's Saturday Night." Old as I am, I admire and envy the feelings of the soul that could prompt that glorious stanza, and if it is possible for you to forget them so far as to profane the sacred scene with a sacrilegious sneer, I would be glad you went away so far that it could never reach my length to convince me 't is fact, not declamation, that "All mankind are players," and poets the veriest puppets of the whole. But I will not believe it possible, spite of all you could say or swear, should you take it into your head to make oath with the Wangee rod in your hand that all the Exise laws in Britain could so far obliterate those dear ideas from a friend ever capable of forming them, as to laugh to-day at what yesterday you seemed to transcribe with the warmest blood that flowed about your heart, and made all mine flow in my eyes when I first read it. Indeed at that moment I thought you the first poet in the world. Since, I have met a man from London who tells me he would never grudge a journey to Scotland, had it done nothing but made him acquainted with Burns's poems. Yet I do not aver this was his favourite stanza, nor do I positively assert that gratitude won't make you as fond of him as I think you would be of your brother Exciseman³ who writes Common Sense and answers to Mr. Burke's book on the French Revolution. I think Payne's pamphlet is indeed much calculated to sow the seeds of discontent, if not revolution, in Britain next, and to be sure it is a most surprising revolution in the writer's situation that has already enabled him to have so active a share in the fate of two great nations as to attract by unavoidable consequence the notice of a third to whatever makes its appearance with the sanction of his name. You see I take it for granted you read whatever is meant

in support of the equal and independent rights of man, with a view to abrogate all the partial distinctions of nobility and wealth, and destroy the claims of primogeniture along with the pageant of Royalty and all those hereditary honours which it is so natural for us to love and clasp at either in reversion or prospect while we revere our parents or are attracted to our children. Tell me, Dr. Burns, would fame have equal charms for you, could you conceive it no distinction to your child to have it told he was son to the great Ayrshire Bard that lived about the 1790, when all London, in consequence of his publication, talked Scots and wore tartan? For my part, I confess I sometimes for a moment wish I had been French; I should have been more reconciled to the extinction of my family had they been smothered in the ruins of general oblivion than seeing their memory sacrificed to folly, and sinking singly without any surrounding event to divert my attention from the self-interested, humbling depredation. If you deride this as vanity and silliness, remember it is sincerity, truth and nature, and I am writing to a friend to whom I am in the habit of saying all I think, and so must say many a foolish thing as well as this. I am stopped by an express from Loudoun Castle to tell me Lady Wallace is ill—I hope not dangerously; yet at fourscore every complaint becomes much too serious. Much reason have I to thank that kind Providence which has preserved her thread so long entire for me and mine for herself. When the change comes it must be to the better. She cannot fail of a reward, if an eternal attention to make others happy deserves to be so ourselves. Farewell! To-morrow I begin to sew a set of Holland shirts; so I may not write again for I don't know how long. The remembrance of

this day's talk will make a while's silence I suppose a most pleasing dispensation, for I'm sure you must be heartily sick of this long drone—like a Whig preaching. But consider I had allowed you a longer respite than you have been used to from me almost since I wrot you first and you are the only one I now sin against in the article of writing too much or too often; nor shall I be long guilty of this offence even to you, as every day increases the difficulty both to the eyes and hand of Dr. Burns, your sincere friend and obedient humble servt.,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Dr. M'Gill in April 1796 stopped proceedings in the heresy case against him by expressing deep regret for the disquiet he had caused, explaining the challenged passages in his book, and declaring his adherence to the standards of the Church on the points of doctrine in question.

(2) Gilbert Burns was married on the 21st June of this year at Kilmarnock to Miss Jean Breckenridge of that town.

(3) Thomas Paine was once in the excise in England. He published a pamphlet entitled *Common Sense*, in 1776; and the first part of his *Rights of Man* was a reply to Burke's *Reflexions on the Revolution in France*.

Burns was now making preparations for leaving Ellisland and taking up his abode in Dumfries. He sold his crop in the third week of August, and a considerable time before that sent Mrs. Burns and the children to Ayrshire. It appears from the following

letter that Mrs. Dunlop visited them there. She then for the first time set eyes on Jean Armour.

*Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Ellisland,
near Dumfries.*

DUNLOP 27th Augst. 1791.

Wishing to address the seat of the Muses, I borrow the pen of one of their votaries, and employ Jenny Little to write for me. Fatigued with my journey, oppressed with the cold, and the remembrance of those I left behind, I have indulged myself lying in bed these two days, from whence I dictate this to return my thanks to you and to the kind agreeable family from whom you procured me so hospitable and so elegant a reception; likewise to give you accounts of Mrs. Burns and her two little ones, for I did not see the eldest, he being with your mother. Mrs. Burns I found in all the rosy bloom of health and beauty. I was delighted with the cheerful openness of her countenance, the intelligence of her eyes, and her easy, modest, unaffected manners. My little godson is a perfect cherub, and will be a great fop, for he will not put on his hat since it lost the gold band at the fair. As for the little one, he is a jolly Bachus, fit to bestride a hogshead, for every limb of him is like my waist. I thought to have blest you with their unexpected return, having discovered a retour chaise that would have landed them safe with you as yesterday, but three small-pox being struck out upon William's arm, and Mr. M'Kenzie apprehending he might still have two or three more, though he was scarcely at all sick, I durst not advise his mother to remove him. I shall be glad to hear your arrangements are on, and that Miss Stewart likes the¹ Prince of Abyssinia. She is almost the only young lady I ever met whose acquirements really increased the esteem

for her family. I have seen many sewed maps, but never before met one of Scotland. That mother surely has merits whose early instruction impresses on her daughter's mind the love of her God and her country, and recommends those accomplishments that tends to make a worthy father happy. I rejoice that Jenny's great fist has filled up the paper, for if I had wrote myself you would not have got so easily off. I should have led you a dance as far as Windermere before I had bid you farewell.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas*.

*Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Ellisland,
Dumfries.*

DUNLOP, 22nd Sept. 1791.

[Franked by Kerr: Perth, Twenty-seventh Sepr. 1791.]

DEAR SIR, — Whenever I got home I wished to write you, but, confined to bed, found it would not do; so employed Jenny Little to hold the pen; but on this, as well as other occasions, found how important the use of one's hand is, and that no one else can write for us the most insignificant line to a friend; for, spite of Jenny's being the most punctual clerk in the world, I felt it impossible to dictate what my own pen would of itself have tryed to express, nor could I for a moment throw aside some kind of awe for the comments of the poetess upon every word I should say. Lord knows how my mind has learnt to display itself with such barefaced audacity before the more apparently awful tribunal of the Bard himself; yet so it is, among the unaccountable oddities of womanhood; while I approach you fearless, her wit holds me in check. So you shall see a female infidel scream and tremble at the sight of a mouse,

when she dares brave her Creator. What makes me more displeased with her copy than all the rest is that it has not been able to obtain me an answer, which I will, as long as I can, indulge the vanity of thinking might have been the consequence of its being traced over by my own half-withered hand, for I dare not call it a fair one in any sense of the word. Indeed, I fear it will soon forget its cunning altogether in the writing way, its only practice now being to you, and that itself far less frequent than when you first permitted me to usurp your correspondence — a privilege I suspect you have some thoughts of retracting, or at least grudge the cost and trouble of encouraging to that unreasonable frequence it has sometimes intruded itself both upon your purse and leisure. Yet, take courage, my good friend, for Mr. Kerr being come back from Ireland, you will not for the future pay more for my letter than it is worth, but have it at the real value for *nothing*, except the inestimable price of making me believe you receive it with pleasure by now and then affording me a few lines, and sometimes for a wonder saying as much in answer as to show you read the contents. The first instance of this I require will be your telling me if Mrs. Burns is returned, or if you have heard of the recovery of the child from that malady which I saw threatening him, and which I shall rejoice to hear is fairly over, as I am sure it would cast a cloud over hearts to which I wish eternal sunshine. I have not heard of Mrs. Henri's sailing yet; she has again changed her destination, and goes in the *Sally* — I believe just about this time. I hear the voice of the dear little Henri in every breeze. May kind providence calm the wind, and smooth every wave of their passage through the stormy voyage of their whole life ! I have heard of An-

thony; he has got or purchased a ship called the *Resolution* in the Bengal trade. I have heard of James; he has a small command of horse with Abercromby,¹ making roads on the Ghats of the Indies against or perhaps for Tippoo-Saib. I have a large family here — young ladies and old women — and am just about to lose one of the most favoured of my female friends,² who first introduced you to my knowledge, for which I am busy sewing her an apron as a remembrance when she goes from us; nor does she leave a woman in Scotland who can supply her place to me. Indeed, she has a thousand merits, besides giving me your book, which give her the same claim on my esteem as this does on my gratitude. But fate dooms me, I believe, to mourn the loss or absence of every one I love, nor do I know how I should get on to my journey's end if I did not, instead of serious wailings, now and then try to laugh at or rhyme away sorrow. I meant to make Jenny transcribe some lines I had conned in the chaise alone, but my courage failed me. I don't know how it comes — I very seldom can exhibit verse but to that supreme judge to whom I once promised to show every line I had or ever should write, and who in return promised always to keep them wholly to himself, and show me others in return, among which I shall beg that to the memory of the Earl of Glencairn, and, if you please, the song³ you said you wrote, the subject of which seems to be on the recovery of Keith. She is not yet well; her elder sister has recovered her health, but has lost her whole wardrobe and paintings by a large trunk stolen or cut from the back of the carriage as her brother and she were travelling between Blair and Beith, on her return from Arran, where she had spent the summer, and was come in full contemplation of the Ayr

races. But disappointment hangs over our most innocent and seemingly most certain enjoyment, and remorse sometimes hangs over those others which disappointment has been pleased to spare. What a sad, bad world this would make of it altogether if we take the voice of declamation for truth ! Yet you say, and I half believe you, that none of us are perfectly in earnest when we think or say we are weary of it. At least, 't is as we weary of our dinner, to be the more ready for supper ; and we should be most grievously vexed to be put to bed without it, or quietly hushed in the cold grave whenever we declare ourselves impatient for its composing rest. I remember you used likewise to tell me that you were sometimes very eager to begin a correspondence with the gentlemen, but always tired of it when once you saw their manner. I hope you don't find this the case with the ladies too, but their manner is too varied ever to be known. 'T is to our changes half our charms we owe. Should those changes be to worse, perhaps as a change of air, even from good to bad, agrees sometimes with children, and has often been known to cure them of the chin-cough [whooping-cough], men, who are but bigger boys, may agree with similar alterations in the atmosphere at the mind or expression of us poor females, who were once young, and may be grown old, once rich and grown poor, or handsome and become homely. If so, this mixture of absurdities has been wisely given to make us the better half of creation, happier than we should otherwise have been. You see I am optimist as well as Voltaire. If I find leisure, I will enclose you the address of the Once Fair Forlorn to The Benevolent Genie⁴ who kindly conducted her to the enchanted castle of Closeburn, after supplying her and her company with as much gold as they could desire, or as is

seldom intrusted to the sons of Parnassus. But, dear Burns, it was on a very different subject I sit down to write you—one on which I shall make no comment till I hear from you. It was to inclose the within letter, which I entreat you may return me with your sentiments, which I will not anticipate by expressing my own. Only in general I am no friend to epitaphs, and it has long been a maxim of mine—

Those modes and merits marbles ne'er impart,
Love graves them deepest on the living heart.

In the present case I am sure mine sincerely add,

That name, dear youth, to latest time defend,
Whose gentle virtues made mankind Thy friend.

Adieu, my dear Sir; do me the justice to reckon me among the sincerest, though perhaps the most insignificant of yours, and allow me to believe you a little mine.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Abercromby was ordered up from Bombay in the beginning of the year to support Lord Cornwallis, the Governor-General, in his first abortive campaign against Tippoo. He had to cross the Ghats with a heavy train.

- (2) Miss Betty McAdam.
- (3) Nothing is known of this song.
- (4) Probably verses of her own.

Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop, Dunlop House,
Stewarton, care of Mr. Ballantine, Ayr.

DUMFRIES, 26th Oct. 1791.

Forgive me, Madam, for not writing you sooner. I have been measuring my land that I had sold the crop of; taking a house here in town and furnishing it; preparing my horses, cows, farming things, etc., for sale next week; and

in short, have not had a moment's rest to do any thing with a pen.

I highly approve of Mrs. Henri's idea. The lines she has written are at once, simple and energetic. *As they are*; none of the amendments above the lines; is my judgement of the matter.

Cursed business just now interferes.— I can do nothing but seal this, and inclose some verses I mentioned to you.— I am ever, Dear Madam, your obliged humble servt.,

R. B.

Mrs. Henri had written Burns before leaving for France with her child, probably sending for his criticism a suggested inscription for her husband's tombstone—the second enclosure in Mrs. Dunlop's last letter.

*Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Ellisland,
by Dumfries.*

DUNLOP, 26th Oct. 1791.¹

DR. BURNS,— I hope your not writing me is one of the greatest sins you shall ever be guilty of. Yet you know not the extent of that crime. Deprived as I am of all the friends of my former life, the notice of the Bard has been almost the only foreign circumstance of pleasure that has helpt to gild the gloom of a long train of domestic misfortunes, and reconcile me to the world and myself. If you withdraw it, you know not of what you deprive me. When reflection becomes intolerable, I lose it in writing to you, or when I am pleased, indulge the levity of momentary joy in scribbling what I would commit to no other eyes. I have perhaps deluded myself into a belief that you were not averse to an intercourse in which I found so much pleasure, and you

have sometimes flattered my imagination so far as to say my letters afforded you a kind of similar indulgence. Female vanity is credulous, and my esteem for you too high not to believe you far above every affectation, even those that plead the excuse of being suggested by politeness or good-nature. I have therefore taken literally what perhaps was only words of course and meant nothing. If so, it is an error I am grievously vexed to renounce, but yet would be sorry to persecute you to support, although those *jeux d'esprit*, which were address to a genius I admired and a man I believed to receive them with friendly partiality, would form an insipid amusement from the moment that opinion forsook me, and the more serious effusions of the mind cease to relieve its anguish when expected to be regarded with ridicule or contempt instead of that degree of approbation which gratifies us from a good and delights us from a great character, to whose superior talents the world has borne ample testimony, and from whom we teach ourselves to expect more than poor humanity can really equal, or we have any right to meet. If this is my present case, the discovery will rob me of one of the greatest, as well as last, entertainments of my life — one of the very few for which my soul retains a relish, but which it was perhaps too absurdly self-conceited in me to believe I was qualified to render agreeable to anybody but myself. To be sure, yours is an instructive silence, calculated to let me know both you and myself. If you persevere, and quit Ellisland without a word of animadversion on poor Susan's letter — a point so material to her sore wounded spirit — or on my two packets replete with rhymes, and all those little senseless reveries that speak the very soul of undisguised freedom and confidence, or else the quintessence of folly in the

writer, let me beg you, only tell me once for all. Have I done anything to disoblige one I so much wished to fix my friend? Or, on seeing me a little, have you no longer found me worthy of that goodness you before favoured me with, and even resolve to put it out of my power to ask after the charming little fellow of whose name I have been so proud? Do you think me too indifferent to your concerns to deserve information about what is of most consequence to yourself, such as the health of your family and your future destination? Or are you so perfectly indifferent about my happiness as not to care how much your neglect mortifies and distresses me. I am indeed ill at ease. Death has been busy at my side. Poor Lady Wallace snatched away in a moment when least looked for. The storm howling, and no accounts of poor Susan since she sailed; her child ill on the voyage and the tidings of death awaiting her arrival. The death of her kind protector, her constant friend and best parent — Heaven knows to what heart-wringing woes she, poor soul, is destined. As for my worthy old friend, she is only removed to happiness and Heaven. But what tender ideas does her departure awaken, and how does memory dwell on the events of those six and forty years we two have passed together! Alas! they are meditations among the tombs, and I alone am left to tell them. And is it now you can forget me, when a poet might choose me for his theme, exposed to mourn the friends buried around me, and fear for those who remain; the double shock of absence and danger; yet absence, danger and death I believe less cruel than the loss of a friend present and in health. This were a new misfortune, one I have never experienced, and therefore would dread more than all the rest, which repetition has in some measure

familiarized me to support. Don't you initiate me in a sort of knowledge my nature shrinks from by retracting that attentive kindness you had so long accustomed me to that time seemed to create a just title to its continuance, however little I can in any other respect have to plead. I am obliged to stop, but I beg you'll let me hear, if but by a single line, by return of post how the children are, and if you had both my letters and the one enclosed from Mrs. Henri. Farewell, and give me an address if you wish me writing in future, which I cannot bear to suppose you do not.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Note that this letter and Burns's last crossed one another.

Burns, having now lost the whole profits of the Edinburgh edition of his poems, except what lay in Gilbert's hands as a loan, gave up the farm of Ellisland, and took up his abode in Dumfries as an excise-man in charge of a foot-walk on a salary of £70 a year. The family removed to Dumfries in November. The next letter from Burns refers to one he must have received from his friend announcing the approaching publication of Jenny Little's Poems.

*Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop, Dunlop House,
Stewarton.*

DUMFRIES, 14th Jany. 1792.

You will scarce think it credible when I tell you, dear Madam, that ever since I wrote you last, I have actually not had time to write you again. Leaving my former habitation, settling here and getting deeply engaged in a line of our business to which I was an entire Stranger; not to

mention hunting of Smugglers once or twice every week, and a ten days' jaunt into Edinr¹; these have so entirely engrossed my time and attention, that, except letters of indispensable business, I have not put pen to paper on any given subject since you heard from me. Now, that hurry is nearly over. I have got into the routine of my occupation, and have far less occupation than in my former place; and upon the whole, I have every reason to believe that I shall be much more comfortable for my change. Indeed, Change, was, to me, become a matter of necessity. Ruin awaited me as a Farmer; though by that peculiar Good Luck that for some years past has attended all my motions, I have got rid of my farm with little, if any loss.²

Thus have I dedicated one page to my own concerns; and now I begin another with wishing, most sincerely wishing you the Complnts. of the season. Whatever number of years the Great Disposer of events may have allotted you, May the joys of those years very far overbalance the sorrows! Notwithstanding your many tender Relatives and near Connections, I do not think that there is an individual in the world who shall more desire or enjoy the prolongation of your existence than I; yet there is a period beyond which life is a burden too heavy to be borne, and it must be a very ungenerous, selfish attachment that would wish to have a Friend present with us at the expense of making that friend miserable. As to your prediction of sixty-three, I laugh at it. You have a hale, antedeluvian constitution; and if you have any enemies in the world, wretches who are wicked enough to wish your departure from this state of Being, I have no doubt but you will hold out tough and hard, and live—and live—and live, till these atrocious *Scelerats* gnash their teeth in the agonies of despair.

I most cordially congratulate you on your good news from Anthony. Pray, have you heard nothing lately of Mrs. Henri and her dear Babe? Her worth and her misfortunes would interest the most hardened Bandit in her fate. Oh, how often has my heart ached to agony, for the power "To wipe away all tears from all eyes!"

I am glad to hear so good an account of Jenny Little's affairs. I have done next to nothing for her as yet, but I shall now set about and soon fill up my Subscription-bill.

I feel much for your loss in the late excellent Lady Wallace. Losing a Friend is a loss one can ill afford at any time, but taking an everlasting farewell of, the Friend of many years, is truly — distressing. That it may be long ere any of your friends have occasion to feel for You, what you now feel for her, is the ardent wish and prayer of, Dear Madam, your obliged and obedient humble servt.,

ROBT. BURNS.

(1) Burns went to Edinburgh on the 29th November and returned to Dumfries on 6th December. The only letters of this period that are preserved, besides one to Ainslie, are philandering and poetical epistles to Mrs. M'Lehose.

(2) This can only mean that he had not lost more than the capital with which he started farming. The alternative meaning of the words is impossible. Mrs. Burns said that they did not come empty-handed to Dumfries, but it is almost certain that she referred mainly to the farm "plenishing" with which they furnished partially at least the house in the Wee Vennel. We find, indeed, that Burns had cash in hand immediately after coming to Dumfries. He

paid off his debt for Fergusson's tombstone, and sent John Ballantyne a draft for £32 for a bill he had drawn on Ballantyne's bank. But what money he had at command was clearly nothing else than the proceeds of the sales of his crop and stock, and the greater part of it must have been immediately swallowed up in the payment of the above and other debts. It is all but certain that if Burns had come to Dumfries with £300 in cash besides or including the proceeds of his sales, he would not have begun house-keeping in the Wee Vennel, his removal from which in 1793 indicated an improvement in his circumstances, and he would have been under no necessity to incur new debts, as he afterwards told Gilbert he had done at this time.

Ad. Mr. ROBERT BURNS, Dumfries.

DUNLOP, 25th Jany. 1792.

[Franked by Kerr : Edinr., Twenty-eighth Jany. 1792.]

DR. SIR,—I have this afternoon yours. Your silence has been so long I could hardly persuade myself it was the produce of chance. With whatever reluctance I admitted the idea of its being a deliberate act of the kind, I found it one it was wholly impossible altogether to exclude. Yet I did not know how much impression it had made till I read yours. It says nothing to tell you it gave me pleasure; indeed I dare hardly affirm it did, since the native, unaffected kindness with which it was wrot created an agitation that made me perfectly sick for more than an hour after I read it first over, and although I must complain that you gave me no reply to what I asked you about Corbet, nor a single hint whether you had still any plan in view, or whether you

could indulge me in any effort to assist it, yet you wrote so much like a friend that I must believe you in earnest, however improbable the alledgedance of your not being able to find time to take up a pen for so many months but from necessity. Dear me, what a busy life yours must be. I wish you may not have been hunting the Whistle great part of your time. I am sure were I to pretend being so close employed, people would alledge I was hunting the gouk¹ the far greatest part of mine, although I have many useful occupations, and one of them has been, like you, hunting smugglers, and perhaps, like you too, in vain; for I have never been able to obtain intelligence of one pint of brandy, spite of all my assiduity. So all this week I have done nothing but read Wilson's² poems, which Jenny Little brought me, and I am almost sorry I have seen them, tho' they have afforded me some agreeable enough entertainment, and inspired me with surprise and a very considerable admiration of their author who, I am told, was really in the situation he ludicrously enough describes of a travelling packman, and is now actually an operative weaver in the little village of Lochwinnoch, from which he names one of his pieces. If you have not seen this volume, let me know, that I may send it you, as it is the only one of the many spurious progeny to which your genius has given existence that has ever yet fallen in my way, that one is not ashamed to hear called poetry. This is the production of a manly mind, not degraded by a wholly illiterate education, and although he has followed his great original in his greatest fault of admitting a little ribaldry, he has really, at least in my opinion, so much intrinsic worth and so many real beauties as to make one half forgive a folly they regret, and consider rather as a mean condescendence to the low-mindedness of others than

an indulgence to himself in the man who does not require that pitiful resource often to please, and who but for this would hardly ever offend. You will wonder, after what I have said, why I should say I am almost sorry I have seen this book. It is, my good friend, for two reasons. I fear it will hurt Jenny by comparison, as it has all that masculine advantage over her that your sex generally have over ours on paper. Next it spites me at my own line of life to see frequent returns of the *belle-lettre* where I least expected or wish to find it; and although I did with inexpressible delight admire, wonder at and court the acquaintance of a Bard, I own myself vext, degraded and disappointed when I am led to suspect one must not expect to find high life except below stairs, where I am by ten thousand reasons prohibited from seeking it out, and where its very frequency would even much diminish its value, since it would make us only consider as an imitative art what in one or two very singular instances must enchant us as the native spring of an amazingly superior soul, endowed with intuitive force to discover all that the foremost men of their age or country can with every help be taught. In short, I do not wish to discover a great many Wilsons among the websters of Paisley, however much their appearance must raise the state of Scots knowledge and universal civilization in the eyes of strangers. Now, my dr. Burns, don't you think all this very little and narrow-souled in me? I am not sure but it is; yet 't is what I feel, and therefore to you out it comes. If you can excuse me to myself, do it; if not, tell me your sentiments, and, enforced with all your commanding powers of expression, I daresay they may correct mine, which you know is the use of cultivating the intimacy of those we really esteem and regard, and from whom we never wish to differ in opinion.

I have not been well for some days past, my head confused, my face flushed, and my lips swell'd — all these the common indications of a complaint to which I rather hope than fear one day falling a prey, though, as the symptoms rather abate than increase, it may probably not be at this bout. Indeed, 't is an event for the consummation of which I feel no immediate impatience nor no troublesome apprehension or anxious desire of delay. If, indeed, my wishes are swayed towards a continuance in this much less interesting life than I once thought it, 't is more on account of advantage to my girls than spleen to any creature whatever that I would spin out an existence I have no reason to believe wears even the face of importance to any thing but myself, were it not that you and one or two more sometimes are good-naturedly inclinable to favour me with that partial notice which is so flattering as to reconcile me to myself, and lead to a temporary forgetfulness of those past events that throw gall over the present, and destroy one's relish for or hope in the future. As to enemies, I don't believe I have one on the whole globe, and my God, who sees my heart, is witness it deserves none, since there is no living creature to which it wishes an ill, or from whom it supposes an injury it can resent. Were I to die at this moment, I am able to say to you and to myself it would be in peace and charity with all men, and, what is more, all women too. If more is required, Lord forgive me, for indeed my friendly intercourse and cordial approbation are confined to very narrow limits, and mine is like the Empress of Russia's³ treaties — a piece of mutuality with the world, but an offensive and defensive alliance with almost none in that world ; nor is there any phenomena in art or nature I can less account for than my choise of those very few who are ex-

ception to that apathy which encrusts my once warm affections, and seems to engross and concentrate all the cold remains unknowingly as to them and involuntarily as to myself. Have you, dr. Sir, any fancy for those useless observations that confound reason and suspend belief in experimental philosophy. If so, I can serve you up a feast. If not, serve this page as I alledge you have done many of mine ; never read it ; for it will prove tiresome and ridiculous. If you have that curiosity which some very great men have had to a degree as great as their fame, you will be interested as they have been, and perhaps led to trifle away some time as I have done in a way to be laughed at by others, and not a bit wiser or more certain yourself what to believe than when you begun. But to our experiments. Perhaps you already know that if you immerse a piece of glass wholly in water, so that the air gets at no part of it, in that situation you can cut it with a pair of scissors like a sheet of paper in what form you please, tho' not even then with a knife. The second is more complex and dubious, nor shall I so positively answer for its success. On this occasion I wish you were Sir Isaac Newton, and I at freedom to write you with the same liberty I do now. Yet I would not make the exchange were not the metamorphosis to cease the moment the philosophick poet had answered my letter, as I would be too great a loser to give a Scots Bard for an English phlegmatic philosopher, of whom I fancy I should be tired the moment he had satisfied my ignorant curiosity.

2nd Experiment.—Take a hair or thread of any kind, about a quarter of a yard long. Pass it through a ring of any metal ; tie the ends in a knot ; seat yourself steady, resting your elbow, so as to prevent your hand shaking ; then, taking the knot between your finger

and thumb, hang the ring suspended over the center of a glass or tea-cup, where, in some time, which, if you are tolerably warm either in body or mind, will probably not exceed or even reach to half an hour, and is commonly much shorter, the ring will acquire a steady, pendulous motion, always increasing, till it strikes upon the sides of the dish, which it will continue doing, sometimes very irregularly, till it has sounded the exact number of the last past hour of the day; after which, without your being sensible why, the pendulous motion will change, or altogether cease, and be a good while before it takes place again, when it will just repeat the same course a second, third or fourth time or as long as you have patience for the trial; your elbow always resting on the table where the glass or cup stands, and your hand in a hanging posture suspending the ring over it as still as you can hold it. This I have tried at every hour of the day, and almost of the night, at first in play to laugh at the fancy, but latterly with a much more than half converted faith that electricity, gravity, animal magnetizm, or in short nature, in some way or other intermixt a mysterious influence beyond my understanding in the result of this seemingly ridiculous, silly experiment, so like the unmeaning trifling of a child that I blushed to be seen try it, or to say I believed in the possibility of its truth. Now, I would wish to know if anybody of sense or observation is convinced, and would be glad if you never heard of such a thing before, that sometimes, when you have nothing else to do, and happen to think of me, that you will try this trick in remembrance of an absent friend, who may perhaps at the same moment be similarly employed, and will certainly if so be thinking on you, and wondering if you can be infected with her propensity

to credulity or, like her, jealous that, without being sensible of it yourself, you do something to favour instead of do justice to the success of your expectation. Indeed I believe, were my faltering faith in this folly confirmed, it would serve to strengthen my hopes in Heaven, as it would be one more incomprehensible link of connexion added to the large chain of the wonders of Almighty Providence in the glorious works of creation — every one of which to me bears a new witness of divine goodness and infinite mercy, from which beings even worse than myself shall not be excluded. But of this enough, and I dare say you will think a great deal too much. I have not heard of Mrs. Henri or the child for some time. There has been letters indeed to her sister, but as she was in the East country, I am hitherto uninformed of their contents. Neither have I heard of James since the retreat of Abercromby,⁴ at which I begin to be somewhat alarmed. Yet happy, grateful and contented ought always that mother to remain whose principal fear is only for the safety of her children. I hope there is no fault in the silent ejaculation the heart breathes that that alone may be the nature of all my anxieties, and I shall without much thought or effort subscribe to the third petition in the Lord's Prayer for them, my friends and self, trusting that heavenly mercy will choose the best possible time for what must sooner or later be. I wished to write you when I was ill lest I should never find another opportunity, but the confusion in my head would not permit my doing it. Even after I began this I was not able to go on, and it has lain for some days. I am now pretty well again; indeed I was always going about, but very uneasily to myself, which is no longer the case. I heard from Mrs. Moore lately. They always ask most kindly after you, as if they were foreigners, and

believed Dumfries was within a mile of Dunlop, or that you and I were living in the same house. How sadly are they mistaken, when we are almost as great strangers as if one of us were gone to London. But now that your apprenticeship, you say, is over, I trust we may meet oftener, at least poetically, and as Wilson says—

Tho' miles in scores atween us lie,
An' hills and seas, yet, hark ! we 'll try
Out owre them a' to crack.

So much for a specimen of the Weaver's lays. It is now late ; I am blind and drowsy ; so I fear are you too. Yet could I longer see, I would not yet bid you adieu, for I feel in a very talkative mood, and would gladly go on as long as the paper would permit me, tho' you should give a curse at wasting your time so unconscionably. Perhaps some poor wretch of a smuggler, who gets a mile start of you while you are conning over this scrawl, will bless me from the very bottom of his very heart for the delay of his ruin, or, as it's hard to say where a blessing lights, perhaps it may keep you poring at the very moment when you might otherwise have a very pretty chance of a broken head. Meanwhile, let me return all your good wishes tenfold upon your own head, and pray give my blessing to my godson, who without exaggeration I really think the finest boy I ever saw, and if Mrs. Burns always keeps him in the same command as when I saw him, I make no doubt he may be the greatest pleasure of both your lives long after you will have no other remembrance of, Dr. Burns, your sincere friend and humble servt.,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) April-fooling.

(2) Alexander Wilson, born at Paisley in 1766;

published a volume of poems in 1790; emigrated to America in 1793, wrote the *American Ornithology* and died at Philadelphia in 1813.

(3) Catherine II.

(4) Lord Cornwallis, the Governor-General, himself took command of the forces operating against Tippoo Sultaun at the end of 1790, but his first campaign was practically a failure. He summoned Sir Robert Abercromby (younger brother of the great Sir Ralph), by this time Governor of Bombay, to come to his support from the East. But before Abercromby reached him, Cornwallis decided to abandon the attempt on Tippoo for the season, and the Bombay army, in which James Dunlop was serving with the 77th Regiment, was ordered to retreat, which it did in May.

*Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
Dunlop House, Stewarton.*

(With a sealed jar)

DEAR MADAM, — I have just five minutes less than no time at all to answer your kind letter. Imprimis and in the first place, as to Mr. Corbet,¹ I have some faint hopes of seeing him here this season: if he come, it will be of essential service to me. Not that I have any immediate hopes of a Supervisorship; but there is what is called, a Port-Division, here, and, *entre nous*, the present incumbent is so obnoxious, that Mr. C.'s presence will in all probability send him adrift into some other Division, and with equal probability will fix me in his stead. A Port Division is twenty pounds a year more than any other Division, beside as much rum and brandy as will easily supply an ordinary

family; which last consideration brings me to my second head of discourse, namely your unfortunate hunting of smugglers for a little brandy; an article I believe indeed very scarce in your country. I have however hunted these gentry to better purpose than you, and as a servant of my brother's goes from here to Mauchline to-morrow morning, I beg leave to send you by him a very small jar, sealed full of as genuine Nantz as ever I tasted. This freedom I hope you will forgive. The jar will reach you, I trust, by some safe channel, though by what channel, I shall leave my brother to direct.

Your little Godson sends his most grateful acknowledgments to you.

Wilson's book I have not seen; but will be much obliged to you for a sight of it. My glass is run. *A Dieu je vous commende!*

ROBT. BURNS.

DUMFRIES, 3rd Feb. 1792.

(1) In his letter of September of this year to Mr. Corbet, Burns expresses thanks for an act of kindness, and refers to the engrossing nature of the duties of his *new division*. It may reasonably be inferred, therefore, that Mr. Corbet did get him a port division within a year of his coming to Dumfries, and that he began in this year to draw the increased salary of £90, which Currie says was the limit of his emoluments from first to last. It appears (see *infra*, p. 199) that the enclosure in Mrs. Dunlop's letter of 4th May was a communication from Corbet, perhaps promising promotion to the poet.

Cornwallis at the end of 1791 again commenced serious operations against Tippoo, Sultaun of Mysore,

and once more summoned Abercromby to his aid. The latter left Bombay in November, and the letter to which Mrs. Dunlop refers in her next to Burns must have been posted in that month. Long before it reached her the campaign was over, and Tippoo had made submission. Abercromby was again too late to take a very glorious part in the fighting. Before Cornwallis could make use of him and the Bombay army in the siege of Seringapatam the siege was virtually over. Abercromby's force had no share in the main assault which convinced the Sultaun that he must give in, and by the time it was got into position there was really no more fighting to be done.

The reference in the following letter to the reflexions thrown on Abercromby is to a debate which took place in the House of Commons on February of this year in which the Opposition attacked the general's conduct in the first campaign, Philip Francis declaring that his operations, especially his unfortunate retreat (ordered by Cornwallis of course), were "a disgrace to the British army," and even Fox lamenting "the disgraceful retreat of Abercromby." Dundas defended him, and his subsequent career was a sufficient answer to his detractors, albeit he was not a man of first-rate ability.

The reference to Sandie Wallace and the ladders is almost certainly to some despatch about the operations of Cornwallis's army in the latter part of 1791 after the suspension of the first main campaign against Tippoo,—which despatch Mrs. Dunlop must have misread, giving her grandson rather more glory

than he had earned. Colonel Maxwell, brother of Lady Wallace and uncle of Sandie, had, as previously stated, a command under Cornwallis. In October of 1791 he was detailed to clear the enemy from the Barramaul. In November he attacked a fortified place called Kistnagherry, when a Captain Wallace led the right division of the force in an assault on an upper fort. Ladders were too late in coming up, and when they were posted the enemy hurled down rocks and broke them, and the attempt had to be given up after two hours' hard fighting. Mrs. Dunlop evidently believed that this Captain was her dear grandson, but it is quite plain from the records that the hero of this exploit was a Captain Wallace of the 74th Regiment, who was reported wounded in this affair, and afterwards distinguished himself in the operations at Ser-ingapatam on 6th February of the following, on which occasion Sandie Wallace was acting, as he probably was at Kistnagherry also, as his aide-de-camp to his uncle. Sandie was at this time a lad of sixteen, and was therefore hardly likely in any case to be entrusted with a command of the importance of that with which his fond grandmother credited him.

Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Dumfries.

(Mid-April 1792.)

[Franked by Kerr: Edinr., Twentieth April 1792.]

Did you, my dear Sir, allow me to flatter myself that you ever once reflected how long it might be since you heard from me last, I would make an apology to you for not writing you sooner. As it is, I am afraid I shall almost be at a loss to make one to myself for even doing it now.

Yet I will, as my sex generally do, argue in favour of what I incline myself, and persuade myself it is an agreeable compliment paid to you, and that you naturally and sincerely feel grateful every time I take up the pen, even when you are obstinately or carelessly quite silent upon that and every other subject. You may, indeed, urge in your own defence that you sent me a valuable present — a *strong* testimony of your kind remembrance, for which I had neither the gratitude nor even the good manners to thank you, and for which I still stand your unacknowledged debtor. Here I must in some sort plead guilty, since I must own I did not under my hand acknowledge the receipt of the hippocrene by the bearer, but only, in witness to his fidelity to his charge, and the sense I had of your kindness, sent you Wilson's poems, of which I begged your opinion as a leading card or sanction of my own, which I did not presume to tell you till, after hearing yours, I should take a cue from whether I was most disposed to agree or dispute your sentiments; for, let me tell you, there is sometimes as much pleasure in fighting with a friend, if a clever one and one we truly like, as in implicit consent to those opinions we neither wish to destroy nor are able to confute; and I hoped to have some pleasant sparring with you about this new poet's rural songs, town eclogues, and familiar epistles; at least the portion of them submitted to the public which I sent, for I have seen several more, which he has sent to Jenny Little, and his disinterested, generous conduct to her leads me to feel just what he says himself in one of his pieces of another man —

The mickle learning and sae little pride
Soon gained the hearts o' the country side.

Yet as I never saw him I only judge from his works of the man, and that, you know, is frequently a very fallacious criterion of that heterogenous animal, tho' in honour of my noble penetration it has never yet deceived me, or done it so dexterously that, thank God ! I have in my youth been too shortsighted and in my riper years (not to call them by the rude epithet of old age) too blind to discover any deception, for which credulity I have, I daresay, been oft laughed at, and sometimes, I am afraid, even by my good friend, Mr. Burns, who of all others has least excuse, since he has given a good deal of encouragement now and then to my opinions in his favour, both by his conduct to others and his invariable obliging appearance of goodwill to me and mine, when put in his head ; for I am afraid you seldom think of the absent without being prompted, since, although you must be perfectly convinced I have no correspondent almost but yourself out of my own family, nor even there one to whom I write half so often, nor from whom in ordinary situations I would have the same pleasure in receiving a letter, and that I am never well and happy, never rightly myself when I cease pestering you with some nonsense or other ; yet, were I silent to all eternity, you would never drop a single line to say “what ails my friend, or has she forgot me ?” How very differently do I feel and act by you ! Indeed, I own there is some odds due, and the exchange ought in justice to run against me. If our letters are to be reckoned *ad valorem*, as the writers say, I shall willingly give you two for one ; nay, others would probably think I should say two dozen, and still be short of the mark were you to pay me in kind. But remember, I will grant you credit for no spirit but your own, not even the most genuine in Nantz. I think it is an Italian author

says "He who sends me good spirits gives me more than all the rest of creation can bestow." For this present I have often been your debtor before, and in spite of all Solomon says for strong drink, I prefer the cordial dropt from a feather to that conveyed in a sealed jar were it Rosa Solis instead of your most excellent brandy, in which your friends here and your humble servant with the rest most cordially drank the donor's health; tho' for my own part I dare not affirm it was in an overflowing bumper, yet I believe I may venture to assert no one absent or present could have more relished the toast. Methinks, dr. Burns, I should have been loath to send to my friend a kind of remembrance so apt to occasion forgetfulness, which I suppose you by this time begin to suspect it has just done with me, since I don't think I was ever so long of writing you at any time since I had the pleasure of believing myself intitled to do it twice by your polite return to my first letter, and still more by the infinitely pleasing and flatteringly kind notice you have frequently since bestowed on that very correspondence which at other times I must confess you treat with a very humiliating degree of neglect, perfectly according with the inconsistencies you describe in man, and which are generally ascribed to poets by the rest of the world, who envy or are insensible to their superior merits.

My good friend, Willy Kerr, who, I believe, possesses the very best heart ever came from the hand of his Creator, and will never be exceeded by any future mortal production of omnipotence itself, has been very ill, and is still confined. Should I lose him, I doubt I must lose you too, for I should never have the conscience to let you pay for my letters; at least it would be a terrible check

on my scribbling, and I dread the very death of yours. Judge, then, how earnestly I pray for this, I need not say friend of mine, but friend, if ever there was one, of all mankind.

I have heard from Mrs. Henri, and she is as well as I could expect, but far, far indeed from what either you or I would wish. I have also heard from India—my letters post at the outset of a new campaign. Let me trust in Heaven to guide its end to the safety of my children and the honour and advantage of my country, if honour or advantage can be reaped from those fields—a point in which I am rather undetermined. My poor little Sandie Wallace would see his first effort baffled when they were obliged to retire with those ladders they had so vainly endeavoured to plant, but I pity my son James yet more, if there is any foundation for the reflexions so freely thrown on the brave Abercromby, to whom he has been much obliged, and of whom I shall be extremely sorry his country ever find real cause to complain. As to Anton, he is just in the line I ought to be best pleased with; esteemed, industrious, and, from pure love of home, laboriously vigilant to acquire money necessary to his return, and which he has no regard for on any other account. John and his family all well that are, and more fast a-coming. So is it with Mrs. Vans too, but I am glad they are not in so great a hurry by one half of you. I hope they will never pretend to work double tides, unless Providence chooses to lay in for them double stores, as neither of them have apparently a double portion of talent to supply any deficiency might occur by the garrison's being over-crowded—a circumstance I suppose fortune kept in view when a certain friend of mine was always blest with couplets. I

hope my fine little fellow is well ; indeed, he alone is well worth half a dozen of ordinary infants. I never saw a more charming little creature alive. Do you think it possible he will grow no worse ? for I am morally certain he can grow no better. I see you hold my philosophical experiment too cheap even to be worth laughing at, but I would have loved it better you had esteemed me enough just to tell me so openly and honestly. But, however ridiculous it may appear to your wisdom, time only serves to confirm me in its truth, and I never try it without remembering you. One cause more this for repenting it oftener than once a day, tho', had you been so childish as to have paid a little more attention to a trifle, I had been foolish enough to find a pleasing importance in observing, I would have been still better pleased with my experiment, with you and with myself ; for there is nothing I hate so much or can so little forgive as when my friends are a wonderful deal wiser than myself, especially if I am not perfectly sure but what I may be convicted of being particularly silly and credulous, but cannot doubt of their thinking me so in the meantime, and dare hardly hope for their conversion, even should I prove in the right in the very instance they condemn, and for which I must suffer ridicule and discredit in their eyes. But in the situation in which I am placed, it is no misfortune for a woman or her family that she can amuse herself with trifles while they are innocent, nor that she can even attach a consequence to them in her imagination that renders them seriously interesting to herself. Are they in themselves nothing, and her whole ideas mistake or nonsense ? No matter. They are a blessed delusion, which gives some motion to the stagnant pool of life, and keeps alive that activity which was

implanted for good ends in the human mind, and would perish if deprived of circulation. Our amusements are the necessary food of our affections, our benevolence, and every emotion of the female soul, our health, temper, spirits, almost our existence depends upon them; in short every passion or sensation, except perhaps love, which, till it is superannuated, I suppose is the ruling passion of the sex, and might possibly subsist alone, unsupported either by important occupation or trivial diversion, and be able to awaken insipidity or keep idleness from working mischief to oneself or others, from spreading tattles, or talking scandal, or writing poetry which some men think worse than either of these in a lady, and which to be sure, is one of the last faults for which one would choose to be pointed out to the publick, tho' sometimes it is hardly in one's power to resist the temptation to commit it, or to confess it where they expect a kind benediction, a tender, sympathising absolution unfeignedly pronounced by some fellow sinner, who likes one the better for the unpardonable offence which in himself has been an imputed virtue, universally loved and admired. Farewell. Did I not promise neither to write so long nor so frequently as I had done while you lived in the country? Well, I have half stuck to my word, and that is a great deal in this world, as much as one ought commonly to look for, and often much more than they will find. Few, however, can much disappoint me now; yet some can grievously. I expect to hear very soon from you. Don't try if you are one of that number; 'tis needless, for I assure you nobody has it more in their power; so don't ungenerously make use of it against, Dr. Sir, your sincere friend and obedient humble
svt.,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

Ad. Mr. ROBERT BURNS,
Officer of Excise at Dumfries.

MY DR. BURNS,—It is with pleasure I send you the inclosed, as it must show my friend I have not been forgetful of his interest while I was silent, nor when he seemed to have taken an oath not to dun me out of a single syllable more than I voluntarily bestowed upon him. The truth was that I often delayed writing in hope of hearing from Mr. Corbet, and at last felt ashamed to tell you I had wrot him and never got the smallest reply, lest you should imagine I harassed anyone else with as many disregarded epistles as I have frequently poured out upon you. Meantime be assured it is with the sincerest joy I congratulate myself and you on this event, not more pleasing to yourself, than it is to me, since I flatter myself you cannot help wishing me joy upon it, and so I shall have a sight of your hand, a thing I have in vain longed for this several months past. The time will come, my good friend, and perhaps at no distant date, when you will say to yourself and draw a bitter sigh from the bottom of your heart—“There was a period of my life when I had it always in my power to make one who esteemed me sincerely happy for the trouble of scratching a few lines on half a sheet of paper. What was I that could so repeatedly vex and distress her with omitting so easie a sacrifice to her friendship or even to her vanity, when, Heaven knows, she would have done anything in her power, and rejoiced in the ability to please or serve me? Alas! The time is past. What would I now give it were not?” This will one day be your soliloquy, and although I shall have forgiven you, will you be able to forgive yourself? I am in want of your consolation at this moment. I was miserable till the within for a moment gave a fillip to

my spirits. One of the men on earth to whom my family lay under the most weighty obligations has shot himself through the heart a few days ago. Almost his last hours were spent in testifying kindness and goodwill to me and mine, nor can time, while sense remains in my breast, obliterate the feelings I must ever retain of the uncommon and unexpected friendship he bestowed upon Mr. Dunlop from the first of his acquaintance to the last of his existence. My heart sinks within me at the recollection. Adieu.— Believe me, Dr. Sr., with truth and sincerity, your obliged and obedient humble servt.,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

DUNLOP, 4th May 1792.

Send me your address, for I don't know what it ought to be.

Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS.

DUNLOP, 16th June 1792.

O wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us
To see oursels as others see us !
It wad frae monie a blunder free us
And foolish notion.

I have met that kind power, and to Him let me offer thanks. It is often said that the true value of a friend is to show us our faults, and teach us to make a true estimate of ourselves. After living threescore years in the world a child in this respect, an acquaintance with an admired poet has served to instruct me in this important point. I will not, I dare not say the instruction has been accompanied with all that pleasure with which one generally expects to repay those hours spent for their improvement. To hear our

faults is seldom agreeable ; to feel the effects of them is still less so ; but to mourn their depriving us of what we greatly value and most reluctantly resign is of all most intolerable. Yet this, I think, must be the only fruits of that unsuspected conviction your carelessness affords me of my own insignificance, even where prompted by esteem. I have used my most sincere efforts to please, and had it been in my power to serve, would have omitted no endeavour my imagination could have suggested, nor looked for any greater reward than the pleasure success would have afforded. Yet, with those dispositions commonly so prejudicing in the eyes of all, have I not been able to keep my ground with you. After labouring to my utmost for six years almost, I have the inexpressible mortification to be got far behind the point from whence I set out, without being able to say to what my lee-way is owing. Dr. Burns, do me the favour to tell me this ; it is the only one I shall request, and your doing it will truly oblige me, as it may be useful in correcting my conduct to some other acquaintance. To the present I am afraid I can never expect to be able to compensate for errors I have not even delicacy to guess or deficiencies which no degree of goodwill, it seems, can counterbalance so far as to render their owner any way interesting in your remembrance. Indeed, she could never claim a place there on any other title than a very strong ambition to obtain it and a sense of its value, which even present disappointment does not eradicate. Should I never write you again, which, unless you ask it, I certainly never will, I shall lose the correspondence with more regret than I ever quitted any other in my life. My silence, instead of proceeding from resentment at yours, will be wholly owing to that inexpressible something in a

female mind that makes us feel our acquaintance intrusive the moment it ceases to be estimated above its worth, and forbids our obtruding it on any one where it has lost its relish, perhaps from time's betraying an insipidity that novelty disguised or politeness at first disavowed. If such was your politeness, I have owed it a great deal. It wore so much the face of friendship, vanity could never make the distinction, and the idea was much too flattering for me to reject, when the slightest shadow of it was held out by one whose talents I admired, and to whom the age and country in which I live does general homage. Other people may laugh at my folly for the silly credulity of believing for one second that *you* could find any thing acceptable in *my* letters. Yet when I read over yours, I cannot consider myself as wholly inexcusable for entertaining as long as possible an error so exalting, soothing and comfortable to myself, and from which I had a pride in thinking you, as well as I, drew some additional happiness, which you would not like to part with, although I never had the arrogance to believe you could set the hundred part of the consequence upon it which I have done, and still do, spite of the mortification I feel from your depriving me of its continuance. I shall remember with gratitude as well as pride the duration of those years when in sincerity of heart I named to myself the first of Bards and, in my opinion, one of the best of men, as interested in my happiness, attached to my family, and not disdaining to call himself my friend, nay, sometimes to employ that pen which, however much it delighted the world, never pleased more than at moments when it told me so in assuring me of his regard by those easie, unaffected expressions of kindness which nobody else that I know has so fully at command, and which are so powerfully

formed to convey persuasion even of improbabilities as great as that of which I was glad to convince myself, and sorry and unwilling to give up the belief, were it only possible for me to retain it or figure to myself a reason for your never answering a line I have wrot you since the 3d of Febry. Was the present you then sent me intended as a parting one; as the waters of Lethe, instead of a kind remembrance? If so, dr. Burns, whether shall I forget your past kindness or your present neglect? The one you can with a line obliterate; the other gratitude has inscribed, as Solomon says, upon the table of a heart from whence I much doubt if I or even you have powers to eraze it, since vanity will perpetually find an interested pleasure in retracing those impressions upon my memory which made me a great while happy, when hardly any thing else had power to please, and which I am sure I have never intentionally deserved to forfeit. In the beginning of May I sent you a letter I had from Mr. Corbet. I could not then trouble Mr. Kerr, who was ill, and fearing I had address it wrong — he always doing it for me since you have left Ellisland — and that you might thus have mist getting it, and so not have wrot him, which I could hardly do myself without hearing from you, I begged your brother to let you know of Mr. Corbet's intelligence, unless he knew perhaps of your being gone to Edr., which I then suspected might be the case; otherwise I would have wrot you again myself. But recollecting that you used to be in this country about this season of the year, and hoping the baptism of your brother's boy might now be an additional inducement to procure us a visit, I have hitherto allowed time to wear over day by day, always thinking to-morrow we should see or hear of you. Neither has happened, and my patience, which was

never great, is quite wore out. Blessed are they that expect nothing, for they shall never be disappointed. But this is a wise saying my heart recoils from. May Heaven enable me always to hope, even should I be for ever disappointed. Life wears over in the meantime, and the hours in which we have shared, or fancied we did so, in the esteem of those we wished to be distinguished by, are all this world have worth looking back to — a blessing which can neither be over-purchased or wholly taken away by any future event, except it should be the apostacy of the character we had greatly regarded. And this is a curse from which Heaven has hitherto guarded me so entirely that, thank God ! the very image of suspicion never enters my mind concerning those few I have been fond to call my friends. I had last day a long kind letter from the Dr. [Moore]. He inquires earnestly after you, and writes so warmly, so like the friend I have ever found him, that I like the whole world the better for his sake. The same post brought me accounts of a new granddaughter, but I join the wise man — an old friend is like old wine ; the new will never to me at least be like it. But what have I to do with any new ? All I wish is to be able while I live to retain the old, or if I cannot, to know why and how I have lost them. I will not entreat your writing — I do not even wish a letter if you had rather let it alone, since it's far better to be unhappy one's-self than a trouble to others to whom we can make no return, and to whom our best wishes communicate no pleasure. Even should it be so, you still have mine for yourself, your wife, your boys and all that is yours. O Burns ! Is it thus I bid you farewell, and know not but it may be for ever ? What short-sighted wretches we are ! At least is

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

*Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Officer of Excise,
Port Division, Dumfries.*

DUNLOP, 17th July 1792.

MY DR. SIR,—I said I would never again write you unless you took the trouble of asking it. Will you absolve me from a promise I find it painful to myself to keep, and shall I still flatter myself that you will be pleased to hear from me, although you have convinced me a letter is at most a favour you may accept, but scorn to solicit? Well, be it so; even on that footing I will for once indulge myself. When we are much interested in any point we view it in different lights, and our opinions frequently change with the situations in which objects are placed. When I wrote last, I saw through the medium of selfishness and offended pride—a very magnifying glass for my own mortification and the blame it attached to your long silence, which I ought only to have construed into the whim of a poet or the indolence of a man, instead of imagining it the fickleness of friendship or the giddiness of dissipation, of which I ought not to believe you capable or myself deserving. I have just seen Fanny Burns. Your goodness to her awakes all the just admiration and esteem I have long felt for your character, and tells me that if I have forfeited the regard of one capable of such warm-hearted, generous kindness to an unprotected orphan girl, thrown upon their care, the fault as well as the misfortune must be my own, and there is hardly anything in my power which I would not gladly do to remove it, could I only guess the method of altering any impression accident, misrepresentation, or some folly of my own may have left upon your mind to my disadvantage. If I have ignorantly offended my friend, forget it. If I have seemed capricious, forgive it; or if

uninterestingly insipid, compassionate an involuntary want which no endeavour can supply, and exert towards me the same disinterested good-nature you have bestowed upon your young cousin, whose innocent gratitude has just delighted me. I shall never part with the swatch [sample] she left me of her wedding-gown, but preserve it with care as a relique of charming simplicity and a remembrance of one I have gloried in fancying my friend, who by this very token holds a still larger portion of my regard, however unfortunately I may have sunk in his estimation. Poor thing ! how sincerely do I wish her happy, not only for her own sake as the reward of her early filial piety, but as I am sure her happiness must contribute to yours, in which I shall ever be warmly interested. I am sorry to think that is not at present so complete as I would wish, since I am told your youngest boy has been ill and Frank not well—a distress which, I am persuaded, you will feel with all a mother's tenderness, or perhaps even something still more wringing to the soul. At least such I have seen the anguish of such fathers as I think you will resemble most, tho' some people alledge I am in this greatly mistaken. Yet I am fond of my own opinion, and very unwilling to relinquish it, although its truth should cost you now and then a few more poignant pangs than hearts as indifferent as mine know either to feel or fear, but which are the price sensibility must pay for its transcendent joys, alone fitted to be the poet's portion, in which I shall rejoice to hear the health and prosperity of your present children and the safety of their mother on the expected future encrease makes a part, and that your own good spirits, with the good company, business and amusements Dumfries can afford, are able to make out all the rest. For, believe me, not your

sister, mother, nor even your wife can more sincerely wish you well than I do. Allow me then to enquire for you and yours; make me a partner in your joys by telling me they are all got right again, and that you taste it with redoubled relish from the past alarm. boast too, with a father's pride, of your eldest son's scholarship, which I hear is remarkable, and I will tell you in return that your brother's wife is observed to improve in favour and appearance daily since her marriage, so that neighbours say she is grown perfectly another woman — the surest mark on earth that she is happy, and consequently one may almost pronounce makes him so too. I am sorry to tell you I have lost my privilege of franking for a time, nor can I let you pay for a letter that I am not sure you will be pleased to receive; yet I must, unless you absolutely prohibit it under your hand, ask for my godson now and then, and therefore lodge in pledge the groats that will indemnify him for three-score questions which I may perhaps put before his father deigns to honour one of them with a reply. Yet, Dr. Burns, while you are a good father to your children, an affectionate friend to your relations, a good poet to the world, an honour to Scotland, a good officer to Mr. Corbet, and the boast of Ayrshire, I shall venerate your name, court your notice, and be superlatively ambitious of your friendship, spite of all that carelessness you show for mine, which I must humbly and honestly confess is indeed very useless, but, notwithstanding that, truly sincere, and therefore your gratitude justly due to your most obedient humble sert., FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

*Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Officer of Excise,
Port Division, Dumfries.*

My DR. SIR, — If a poem can be a present to a poet, perhaps the inclosed¹ may be acceptable. If a trifle from

me can please, it will be welcome. If neither its own merits nor the hand it comes from can recommend it to a kind reception from you, let me still hope your gratitude to that sweet nymph Poesy, who promises you immortality, will prejudice you in favours of her meanest votary, so far as to induce you in return for this communication to honour me with a few remarks upon the performance itself, tho' I have not the vanity to expect the place or the writer attract one sentiment worth putting your name to, as you seem intirely to have forgot that of your humble sert., who always remembers you with regard.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

DUNLOP, 26th July 1792.

Dr. Burns, if you wish to write me, do it soon, as I mean to leave this in a fortnight at furthest for the East Country. If you really don't find any pleasure in doing it, I am sure I would be sorry to impose a disagreeable task on any body, especially one whose time is precious to themselves and others. Only tell me you find it inconvenient, and, however reluctantly, I will without complaint bid adieu to a pleasure I hoped would have lasted as long as myself, but to which I could never pretend any rational claim except the strong sense I have always had of its value.

I THE NEW WALK AT D——P,
26TH JULY 1792

Where from the East a riv'let draws its source,
And to the western shore impells its force,
A Gothic dome, defeating Time's pursuit,
Flaunts now triumphant in a birthday suit.
Old age with youth in borrow'd splendor vies,
And painted doors and corners strike your eyes;
Hibernian luster decorates that wall,
Where female courage guarded once our Hall.

Blessings without and hospitality within,
Like the old serpent here have cast the skin ;
How shall I paint this alter'd scene to Thee,
A stranger now, alas ! to it and Me.
Changed with the place myself, alas ! I feel,
Yet true to friendship as the temper'd steel ;
Old walls, my friend, like quaries bear the stroke,
The heart yet strong though all the raffle's broke.
Thus too old friends stand faster than the new,
Firm at the heart though weather-beat to view ;
So Friendship built in characters of old,
(She now, I think, adopts a different mould),
Sole prey to years, her vet'ran favourites die,
But pride must blush to find the young ones fly.

There are few periods of Burns's life about which so little is known as that which lies between his last letter to Mrs. Dunlop of 3rd February and that which follows. He wrote Hill, Cunningham, and James Clarke in February, but there are only three letters of his extant of the months that follow up till August — one of March to General Supervisor Leven, one of April to Creech, one of May to Johnson, and one of July to Stephen Clarke. Perhaps his negligence, which drew from Mrs. Dunlop so many reproaches, is sufficiently explained by the engrossing character of his duties, and by the first sentence of the letter from Annan, which has a remarkable family likeness to the apology he wrote to Creech in April for delaying to conclude arrangements for his new edition :— “Were it not that habit, as usual, has deadened conscience, my criminal indolence should lead me an uneasy life of reproach.”

Compare his fuller apology to Cunningham written

on 10th September of this year:—“Amid all my hurry of business, grinding the faces of the Publican and Sinner on the merciless wheels of the Excise; making ballads and then singing them to my drink; over and above all, the correcting the Press-work of two different publications.” [The 1793 edition of his *Poems* and probably the fifth volume of the *Museum*.]

ANNAN WATER FOOT, 22nd August 1792.

Do not blame me for it, Madam. My own conscience, hackneyed and weather-beaten as it is in watching and reproving my vagaries, follies, indolence, etc., has continued to blame and punish me sufficiently. . . .

Do you think it possible, my dear and honoured friend, that I could be so lost to gratitude for many favors, to esteem for much worth and to the honest, kind, pleasurable tie of, now, old acquaintance, and, I hope and am sure, of progressive, increasing friendship—as, for a single day, not to think of you—to ask the Fates what they are doing and about to do with my much-loved friend and her wide-scattered connexions, and to beg of them to be as kind to you and yours as they possibly can?

Apropos (though how it is apropos, I have not leisure to explain), do you not know that I am almost in love with an acquaintance of yours?—Almost! said I—I am in love, souse! over head and ears, deep as the most unfathomable abyss of the boundless ocean; but the word Love, owing to the *intermingledoms* of the good and the bad, the pure and the impure, in this world, being rather an equivocal term for expressing one’s sentiments and sensations, I must do justice to the sacred purity of my attachment. Know, then, that the heart-struck awe; the distant

humble approach; the delight we should have in gazing upon and listening to a Messenger of Heaven appearing in all the unspotted purity of his celestial home among the coarse, polluted, far inferior sons of men, to deliver to them tidings that make their hearts swim in joy and their imaginations soar in transport — such, so delighting and so pure, were the emotions of my soul on meeting the other day with Miss Lesley Baillie, your neighbour at Mayville. Mr. B., with his two daughters, accompanied by Mr. H. of G., passing through Dumfries a few days ago, on their way to England, did me the honor of calling on me; on which I took my horse (though God knows I could ill spare the time) and accompanied them fourteen or fifteen miles and dined and spent the day with them. 'T was about nine, I think, when I left them; and, riding home, I composed the following ballad, of which you will probably think you have a dear bargain, as it will cost you another groat of postage. You must know that there is an old ballad beginning with —

My bonnie Lizzie Bailie,
I'll rowe thee in my plaidie, etc.

So I parodied it as follows, which is literally the first copy, “unanointed, unannealed,” as Hamlet says: —

BONIE LESLEY.¹

O saw ye bonie Lesley
As she ga'ed o'er the Border?
She's gane, like Alexander,
To spread her conquests farther!

To see her is to love her,
And love but her for ever:
For Nature made her what she is,
And never made anither!

Thou art a queen, fair Lesley,
 Thy subjects, we before thee;
 Thou art divine, fair Lesley,
 The hearts o' men adore thee.

The Deil he could na scaith thee harm
 Or aught that wad belang thee:
 He'd look into thy bonie face
 And say — “I canna wrang thee!”

The powers aboon will tent thee, above, watch over
 Misfortune sha' na steer thee: molest
 Thou 'rt like themsel' sae lovely
 That ill they 'll ne'er let near thee.

Return again, fair Lesley,
 Return to Caledonie!
 That we may brag we hae a lass
 There's nane again sae bonie!

So much for ballads. I regret that you are gone to the east country, as I am to be in Ayrshire in about a fortnight. This world of ours, notwithstanding it has many good things in it, yet it has ever had this curse, that two or three people who would be the happier the oftener they met together are, almost without exception, so placed as never to meet but once or twice a-year, which, considering the few years of a man's life, is a very great “evil under the sun,” which I do not recollect that Solomon has mentioned in his catalogue of the miseries of man. I hope and believe that there is a state of existence beyond the grave, where the worthy of this life will renew their former intimacies, with this endearing addition, that “we meet to part no more.” . . .

Tell us, ye dead:
 Will none of you in pity disclose the secret
 What 't is you are and we must shortly be?

A thousand times have I made this apostrophe to the departed sons of men, but not one of them has ever thought fit to answer the question. “O that some courteous ghost would blab it out!” — but it cannot be: you and I, my friend, mast make the experiment by ourselves and for ourselves. However, I am so convinced that an unshaken faith in the doctrines of religion is not only necessary by making us better men, but also by making us happier men, that I shall take every care that your little godson and every little creature that shall call me father shall be taught them.

So ends this heterogeneous letter, written at this wild place of the world, in the intervals of my labor of discharging a vessel of rum from Antigua. R. B.

(1) Published in vol. i. part ii. of Thomson's *Scottish Airs*, 1798. Miss Baillie married Mr. Robert Cumming of Logie, and died in Edinburgh, July 1843. Burns was just about to enter into correspondence with Thomson, and this was one of the first songs he sent for the new publication.

*Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Officer of Excise,
Port Division, Dumfries.*

MOREHAM, 30th August 1792.

The month of August has to me been the most interesting time of my life on many accounts. It is in general as to Britain as the first month of that season when men expect the return of their labours. To me, my good friend, it has given, and from me it has taken away what was most suited to contribute to my pains and pleasures. Nor have I always been enabled to say “Blessed be the name of August”; although in it was placed my marriage

day, and on it I find renewed the testimony of a valued remembrance which my sorrowing soul had marked as forever lost. I am almost as fond of Miss L. Baillie as you are, and shall hereafter like her the more since the sight of her has been able to give a momentary resurrection to your departed attentions for one who feels them always so welcome. Believe me no music ever poets lent the spheres can sound more melodiously delightful even in their enraptured description than what soothes my eye or ear when your friendly hand plays one of those sweet voluntaries with which you were pleased to favour me last week, but of which you have for so long a tract of time been so very sparing that I might almost say in the words of Scripture "Yet a little while and you would have seen mine no more"—not from resentment, but purely from depression of spirits. However, thanks to the charms of the lovely Lesley, it is otherwise. Yet I am afraid your apropos is not so apropos as you may have been taught to expect. I wish it were, since I think beauty her smallest qualification. Pray, when you see her next, as I make no doubt but you will on her return, mention me as at least one that feels and does ample justice to all her merits, and regrets it when others do not the same in as quick and strong a degree as you seem to do. The apology you make for your silence, were one requisite, would have been sufficient, but, dr. Sir, none is necessary. The greatest estimation I set on your letters, though in themselves the foremost I have ever seen in print or manuscript, is the pleasure you feel in addressing them to me. Should that subside, the salt would to me have lost its savour, and although they could never deserve to be trodden under foot, I will not say but I might one day or other turn and

rend them in pieces. Heaven forbid you ever give me occasion to exhibit such destructive ferocity against those sacred, precious reliques of friendship and esteem, to which I trust every year shall add redoubled value by convincing me the brilliant flash of wit is not incompatible with the most steady strength of unshaken attachment, the manly obstinacy of unveering friendship, unsupported by every aid mean minds look up to, and equally independent of vanity and self-interest. Yes, dr. Burns, it only belongs to such extraordinary men as you to prove that a character capable of this exists elsewhere than in poetic fiction, and since perfection is not granted to humanity, let your weakness only lie in the direction of this singular accomplishment by aiming it towards so unequal an object as your humble servant, who cannot boast of possessing one single quality either to attract or reward such incredible virtue on your part, but by the perfect humility and gratitude with which it will ever be received on hers. Yours was delivered me the very morning after I reached this, and added much to the joy of my reception, tho' I could not guess how you had been able to time its arrival so exactly to tally with mine. Could our inclinations equally quadrate with each other, you would have said a few words of the piece I enclosed you, but perhaps you were too much intoxicate with beauty or rum to read it with the same pleasure I do your ballad, or perhaps it inspired something else which you don't chuse to impart. Pray be so good as let me know what you are about to publish, and on what footing you are doing it; if it is a new work, or a revisal of the former, and whether it is on your own account or that of a bookseller; to whom it is to be inscribed, and as many other particulars as you can take the trouble to tell

me ; especially if you have pruned it neatly to my taste, which I believe you now know as well as I do myself, and which to me is a point of more consequence than perhaps you believe, spite of the repeated times I have told you my sentiments with, I believe, unparalleled and perhaps unpardonable freedom. I have still no late letters from India. From France all is dark and gloomy, nor does one light cloud seem to rise in that horizon, from whence I doubt our very letters are now intercepted, since all we write are returned here. My hope and fears attend the promised birth — a situation in which I am told you are just suited to sympathise. I shall be here yet at least a month, during which I shall be sorry if Ayrshire is honoured with your envied presence, which I hope some favouring genie may retard till my return. It is too tantalizing to go forever like buckets in a well against those we wish most to see now and then, for I would not condemn my best friends to a very long tack of that company which sometimes of late has felt tiresome to myself, for which you have not been wholly blameless. Repent, make restitution, and establish me ever, Dr. Sir, your obliged and obedient humble sert.,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Officer of Excise,
Port Division, Dumfries.

Septbr. 23rd, Morham 1792.

MY EVER HONOURED FRIEND, — This comes to let you know we are all well, and have got a little girl, for which blessed be God ; hoping these few lines will find you in the same state or nearly approaching it, as I was told some time since that ought to be no distant prospect according to the then appearance. We are in the heart of harvest and the most tantalizing uncertain weather possible. Were you here, you

would, if man were a creature susceptible of such a feeling, be thankful you were now no farmer. Yet I think John bears his fate with Christian patience, and neither the daughter, the wind, nor the rain provoke him beyond measure. As to myself, I have got what you call an *infernal* cold, and I am not sure if it would be ill named, for it is just such a one as, warmly lodged where one could so conveniently take sulphur as oft as they pleased, would very probably, were they sufficiently tormented otherwise, give them no trouble at all, although here, where every thing around is going on just as I would have it, I feel this very cold no agreeable companion, as it makes me half afraid to hang over Fanny with that cordial affection her weakness requires, her merit deserves, and I have come so far on purpose to bestow, and which I would regret she should buy at the price of infection to herself or her child, on whom, while I can persuade myself that Heaven guards beauty, innocence and youth, I will hope every blessing will be showered with an all-bounteous hand. Though we are bad judges of the distribution, at least in this case it has been different from what we would probably have chosen, since the beauty at present falls all to the mother's share. Had I been entrusted with the stewardship, I would have allotted it otherwise. However, we ought to believe all is for the best. Alas ! how hardly can I get my own mind at times brought to acquiesce in this heart-soothing proposition, when I tell you my poor Susan, after all her sufferings, is at this moment doomed to struggle with a severe, perhaps a fatal fever in a foreign country, torn with perpetual alarms, overrun with adverse foes on every side, and hourly threatened with still-increasing dangers, from which she wants the possibility of getting free, and the support of every earthly

comfort except the friendship of one poor old man, who knows not what part to take, and may be the means of involving her child in future want by the very steps he would be prompted to take for its interest. Can I, do you think, be entirely an optimist, and consider my own lot and that of my children with that full confidence in, gratitude to, and affection for, that great First Cause from whom all our sorrows and all our joys must flow, and, while I mourn over those favours He has withdrawn, be enabled to acknowledge the unnumbered multitude that still remain to me, and to those I love most? Yet, let me acknowledge that unfeigned joy that dilates my soul when I behold the prosperity of some of my friends, the preservation of others, and the supporting, endearing qualities of mind that have been given to sustain the suffering souls of others doomed to almost more than mortal affliction. Let me trust the same hand will still lead us along that has oft before guided us through the dark vale of the Shadow of Death to this day's meridian sun, which, tho' not brightly shining in a wholly cloudless sky, may soon clear up to enliven that existence his vital rays are allowed to preserve. I shall not repine at the past, where upon the whole good has preponderate, but humbly entreat its continuance to the children of those worthy fathers whose approbation is my pride and joy, whose loss would sink me in unutterable sorrow, but who are, I am convinced, the favourites and darling care of the Master and Father of men and angels. May He exert His overruling mercies to bless you and yours, to recover my dr. Mrs. Henri, and bring back Mr. Moore to his anxious, worthy and affectionate wife. May one post acquaint me of all this, and I will in fervour of spirit bless that day more earnestly than Job cursed that of his birth, tho' my cold

should then be ten times worse than it is. Nay, I hardly know the penalty I would refuse to submit to in exchange for such an accomplishment of my wishes. I will not even murmur though the same letter should tell me you had been in Ayrshire, and in the absence of, dr. Burns, your sincere friend and obedient, humble sert., though you know not, nor can I tell you, what a pleasure that would disappoint me of, or how oft I have wished some accident would postpone your visit till I could share in it; though I somehow have always suspected myself to be less a favourite with you after every time we met than I had been before, while I was conscious you grew in grace with me — a sure sign this, that though you may excell me in poetic fancy, I am your superior in steady friendship. Q. E. D.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

M. Henri, sen., had to flee to Switzerland on account of the Revolution troubles after his daughter-in-law's death, which had actually happened before this date. See p. 221. The child, Burns's "sweet flow'ret," had to be left behind in France, and was brought up by a faithful servant till his grandfather was enabled to return and resume his possessions, to which Mrs. Dunlop's grandson ultimately succeeded.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

DUMFRIES, 24th September 1792.

I have this moment, my dear Madam, yours of the twenty-third. All your other kind reproaches, your news, etc., are out of my head when I read and think on Mrs. Henri's situation. Good God! a heart-wounded helpless young woman — in a strange, foreign land, and that land

convulsed with every horror that can harrow the human feelings — sick — looking, longing for a comforter, but finding none — a mother's feelings, too — but it is too much : He who wounded (He only can) may He heal ! . . .

I wish the farmer great joy of his new acquisition to his family. . . . I cannot say that I give him joy of his life as a farmer. 'T is, as a farmer paying a dear, unconscionable rent, a *cursed life* ! As to a laird farming his own property ; sowing his own corn in hope ; and reaping it, in spite of brittle weather, in gladness, knowing that none can say unto him "what dost thou?" — fattening his herds ; shearing his flocks ; rejoicing at Christmas ; and begetting sons and daughters until he be the venerated, grey-haired leader of a little tribe — 't is a heavenly life ! but Devil take the life of reaping fruits that another must eat !

Well, your kind wishes will be gratified as to seeing me when I make my Ayrshire visit. I cannot leave Mrs. Burns till her nine months' race is run, which may perhaps be in three or four weeks. She, too, seems determined to make me the patriarchal leader of a band. However, if Heaven will be so obliging as let me have them in the proportion of three boys to one girl, I shall be so much the more pleased. I hope, if I am spared with them, to show a set of boys that will do honour to my cares and name ; but I am not equal to the task of rearing girls. Besides, I am too poor : a girl should always have a fortune. Apropos, your little godson is thriving charmingly, but is a very devil. He, though two years younger, has completely mastered his brother. Robert is indeed the mildest, gentlest creature I ever saw. He has a most surprising memory and is quite the pride of his schoolmaster.

You know how readily we get into prattle upon a subject

dear to our heart: you can excuse it. God bless you and yours!

R. B.

A short note is here missing in which Mrs. Dunlop intimated to Burns the death of her daughter Susan. The event was notified in the *Scots Magazine* thus: — September 15, (died) at Muges, Aiguillon, Mrs. Henry, widow of the late James Henry, Esq.

(DUMFRIES, October 1792.)

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

I had been from home and did not receive your letter untill my return the other day. What shall I say to comfort you, my much-valued, much-afflicted friend? I can but grieve with you: consolation I have none to offer, except that which religion holds out to the children of affliction — (*children of affliction!* how just the expression!) — and like every other family, they have matters among them which they hear, see and feel in a serious, all-important manner, of which the world has not, nor cares to have any idea. The world looks indifferently on, makes the passing remark, and proceeds to the next novel occurrence.

Alas, Madam! who would wish for many years? What is it but to drag existence until our joys gradually expire and leave us in a night of misery: like the gloom which blots out the stars, one by one, from the face of night and leaves us without a ray of comfort in the howling waste?

I am interrupted and must leave off. You shall soon hear from me again.

R. B.

MR. ROBT. BURNS, Officer of Excise,
Port Division, Dumfries.

MORHAM, 5th Novbr. 1792.

MY DR. BURNS, — I have not been one day well since I wrot you a hurried note just on receiving the intelligence of

my poor Susan's departure from this, to her, a world of woe to gain that region for which her mind was most truly fitted, and where hope teaches us to look for the reward of all we esteem. I have on this occasion every consolation the case can admit of, since I am perfectly satisfied of the tenderness and affection with which she has been treated, and the fond protector she has secured for her little infant in his grandfather. Meanwhile a thousand strikingly touching circumstances of her last period of life serve to impress the inestimable value of her we have lost, and I can hardly suppress the ungenerous regret that she was not still retained where she never could have tasted ease, or relished enjoyment, and where, even had she been spared, it could not have been for me. I am hardly able to be out of bed ; yet I must endeavour to get home, and shall if possible attempt it the day after to-morrow, which is Wednesday. I never stood so much in awe of a journey, or of meeting my own family. Why, my friend, have you not wrot me to hear that you and yours were all as well as I wish. To know you sympathized, as I am sure you do, in my grief had lifted a load from my heart, which feels, as it were, sinking into the grave. She, poor soul, wished me the amusement of your company when I parted with her last, and perhaps this is one reason more to make me wish it ardently now that I have parted with her forever. I therefore still hope you have not yet made your visit to Ayrshire, though I am uneasie from an apprehension something may be wrong with Mrs. Burns or the children. That alone, I fear, can have retarded you so long beyond your intended time ; nor would I purchase even the satisfaction of seeing you at such an expense to your happiness. My son has just ended his harvest, and escorts me home. Indeed I could not now

go alone, nor have I hitherto been fit to undertake the trial. I hope to reach Dunlop against Friday, by which time perhaps this may reach you. Nothing will now keep me longer absent but the real incapacity of attempting at a return. You remember the epitaph I once showed you. I shall certainly now have it executed. The desire of her soul was accomplished on the 15th of September, the day of the birth of my little grandchild, who for that reason wears the name of Magdalen Susanna. How poor the consolation of a stone ! Yet here it seems to tend to some purpose.

Should ocean e'er restore our orphan son
To the sad shores where life's lone course begun,
This to his weeping eyes may point the spot
Where his loved parents ne'er can be forgot,
Tell where his mother drew her early breath,
And where his father fell a prey to death.

Farewell, my dr. Sir. What a theme were this for your pen, or for your heart, if tenderness belongs to a poet. — Yours,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

The following letter, which has been collated with the original MS. in the Adam collection, is of special interest as illustrating Currie's editorial practice. For instance, in the first sentence of the fourth paragraph he deleted the six words that follow "dramas." In the second sentence of the fifth paragraph he substituted "that of the imagination" for "the reach of invention" and "one another" for "similar passages." Still more remarkable is his omission, from the second sentence of the sixth paragraph, of the whole clause, "And in our theatre here 'God save the King' has met with some groans and hisses, while

‘Ça ira’ has been repeatedly called for.” The next sentence Currie closed at “gag me.” And deleting “In the meantime,” which follows “interpreter,” he began a new paragraph with “I have taken.”

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

DUMFRIES, 6th December 1792.

I shall be in Ayrshire, I think, next week; and if at all possible, I shall certainly, my much esteemed friend, have the pleasure of visiting at Dunlop-house.

Alas, Madam! how seldom do we meet in this world that we have reason to congratulate ourselves on accessions of happiness! I have not passed half the ordinary term of an old man’s life, and yet I scarcely look over the obituary of a Newspaper that I do not see some names that I have known, and which I, and other acquaintances, little thought to meet with there so soon. Every other instance of the mortality of our kind makes us cast a horrid anxious look into the dreadful abyss of uncertainty, and shudder with apprehension for our own fate. But of how different an importance are the lives of different Individuals! Nay, of what importance is one period of the same life, more than another? A few years ago, I could have lain down in the dust, careless, as the book of Job elegantly says, “careless of the voice of the morning”; and now, not a few, and these most helpless, individuals would, on losing me and my exertions, lose both their “staff and shield.” By the way, these helpless ones have lately got an addition; Mrs. B. having given me a fine girl¹ since I wrote you. There is a charming passage in Thomson’s *Edward and Eleonora*:—

The valiant, *in himself*, what can he suffer?
Or what need he regard his single woes?
But when, alas, he multiplies himself

To dearer selves, to the loved tender Fair,
To those whose bliss, whose beings hang upon him,
To helpless children ! then, O then ! he feels
The point of misery festering in his heart,
And weakly weeps his fortune like a coward.

As I am got in the way of quotations, I shall give you another from the same piece, peculiarly— alas, too peculiarly apposite, my dear Madam, to your present frame of mind :—

Who so unworthy but may proudly deck him
With his fair-weather virtue, that exults
Glad o'er the summer main ? the tempest comes,
The rough winds rage aloud ; when from the helm
This virtue shrinks, and in a corner lies
Lamenting — Heavens ! if privileged from trial,
How cheap a thing were virtue !

I do not remember to have heard you mention Thomson's Dramas as favourite walks of your reading. I pick up favorite quotations, and store them in my mind as ready armour, offensive, or defensive, amid the struggle of this turbulent existence. Of these is one, a very favorite one, from Thomson's *Alfred* :—

Attach thee firmly to the virtuous deeds
And offices of life ; to life itself,
With all its vain and transient joys, sit loose.

Probably I have quoted some of these to you formerly, as indeed when I write from the heart, I am apt to be guilty of such repetitions. The compass of the heart, in the musical style of expression, is much more bounded, than the reach of invention ; so the notes of the former are extremely apt to run into similar passages ; but in return for

the paucity of its compass, its notes are much more sweet. I must still give you another quotation, which I am almost sure I have given you before, but I cannot resist the temptation. The subject is Religion ; speaking of its importance to mankind, the author says :—

'T is this, my Friend, that streaks our morning bright ;
'T is this that gilds the horrors of our night.
When wealth forsakes us ; and when friends are few ;
When friends are faithless, and when foes pursue ;
'T is this that wards the blow, or stills the smart ;
Disarms affliction, or repels his dart :
Within the breast bids purest raptures rise ;
Bids smiling conscience spread her cloudless skies.

I see you are in for double postage, so I shall e'en scribble out t' other sheet. We in this country, here have many alarms of the Reform, or rather the Republican spirit, of your part of the kingdom. Indeed, we are a good deal in commotion ourselves ; and in our theatre here “God save the King” has met with some groans and hisses, while “Ça ira” has been repeatedly called for. For me, I am a *Placeman*, you know ; a very humble one indeed Heaven knows, but still so much so as to gag me from joining in the cry. What my private sentiments are, you will find out without an interpreter. In the mean time I have taken up the subject in another view, and the other day, for a pretty Actress’s benefit-night, I wrote an address, which I will give on the other page, called “The Rights of Woman.”

I shall have the honour of receiving your criticisms in person at Dunlop. R. B.

(1) Elizabeth Riddell, born 21st November 1792 ;
died September 1795.

THE RIGHTS OF WOMAN

AN OCCASIONAL ADDRESS SPOKEN BY MISS FONTENELLE ON HER
BENEFIT-NIGHT

While Europe's eye is fix'd on mighty things:
The fate of empires and the fall of kings;
While quacks of state must each produce his plan;
And even children lisp *The Rights of Man*;
Amid this mighty fuss just let me mention
The Rights of Woman merit some attention.

First, in the sexes' intermix'd connection,
One sacred Right of Woman is *protection*:
The tender flower that lifts its head, elate,
Helpless must fall before the blasts of fate,
Sunk on the earth, defac'd its lovely form,
Unless your shelter th' impending storm.

Our second Right — but needless here is *caution*,
To keep that right inviolate's the fashion :
Each man of sense has it so full before him,
He'd die before he'd wrong it — 't is *decorum*:
There was, indeed, in far less polish'd days,
A time when rough rude man had naughty ways
Would swagger, swear, get drunk, kick up a riot,
Nay, even thus invade a lady's quiet.
Now, thank our stars ! these Gothic days are fled ;
Now, well-bred men — and you are all well-bred —
Most justly think (and we are much the gainers)
Such conduct neither spirit, wit, nor manners.

For Right the third, our last, our best, our dearest,
That right to fluttering female hearts the nearest ;
Which even the Rights of Kings, in low prostration,
Most humbly own — 't is dear, dear *admiration* !
In that blest sphere alone we live and move ;
There taste that life of life — immortal love.
Smiles, glances, sighs, tears, fits, flirtations, airs,
'Gainst such an host what flinty savage dares —
When awful Beauty joins with all her charms,
Who is so rash as rise in rebel arms ?

But truce with kings and truce with constitutions,
 With bloody armaments and revolutions;
 Let Majesty your first attention summon,
 Ah! *ca ira!* THE MAJESTY OF WOMAN!

Burns did visit Ayrshire this month, and spent four days at Dunlop. A fellow-guest with him was Dr. James M'Kittrick Adair, his comrade in the Devon Valley tour of 1787, and husband of Charlotte Hamilton. For Dr. Adair's connexion with Mrs. Dunlop see vol. i. p. 206.

*Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Excise Officer,
 Port Division, Dumfries.*

30th Decbr. 1792.

The sportive rays of cheerful morn
 That wake the eastern sky
 Revive not fainting nature's life
 Like friendship's vivid eye.
 But ah! the wave that in the west
 Infolds departed day,
 Ne'er wraps the world in deadly night
 Till that bright beam's away.

I cite not this as a pretty enough extempore thought, nor even, my friend, as the fatal foreboding of a mind viewing through the thick mist of melancholy all the horrors of an unavoidable event she justly stood in awe of encountering, although either of these might have given the lines, in my opinion, no bad right to the place in which they stand. But I trace them over, as the only really valued production ever fell from their author's pen, since they alone carried an enviable palm by having stopt for twenty-four hours the falling of that star of life they attempted to celebrate, and procured the continuance for one day of that chearing beam by which Heaven has chosen to pour its best light upon this

lower world, and soothe our most racking inquietude.¹ I was so ill that morning you left us I could not leave my bed till towards dinner time. It was no cordial for my disappointment in not seeing you when I heard from Keith how much you were complaining² yourself, and when Adair on his arrival confirmed the continuance of your still doing the same as long as he and you were together. Yet I hoped we should have had a line from your brother's to say you were better, or to ask for me, as I surely would for you had I been able. Indeed, as I was, I should never have made out to bid farewell, a word which, in the situation I then stood, would have taken a full flow of health and good spirits to pronounce with undisturbed propriety. My gout became the rose, and so bad that Mr. Adair was so good as stay with me several days longer than he had meant on that account. Yet, after he went it became the jaundice, and still continues so, though not with its first violence. Indeed, before it showed itself in its proper colours, I was one night so bad I never expected to behold the next morning sun, and was half tempted to do what I never did before — that was to call up the servants from their beds, or some of the family, to get me fairly o'er-seen ; but I did not yield to the pusillanimous idea, and in reward of my courage and quietness, behold ! here I am still, much better, tho' I confess not much happier than when I was at the worst, since the main distress I hinted to you still remains in the same indeterminate state as it then did. Indeed, other vexatious circumstances have mouldered away ; such as, the vessel with the servants³ has reached land, tho' not their wished-for harbour. They are, God be praised ! safe in England, and not sacrificed to the manes of the unfortunate pair whose fortunes they followed through

all their tempestuous fate. O Burns ! only a heart like yours can guess with what pangs mine has awaited the tidings of their gaining the British strand, and how I yet dread to hear the last accounts of my poor Susan, and the situation of her poor infant from those faithful witnesses of all those scenes from which I, alas ! was so far removed, and I dare say so often and so earnestly wished for. Perhaps Providence sees good to remove us frequently from what we love most here, that we may with more ease make the last and great removal by not having set up our rest on this side Jordan. But why do I surfeit you with this yellow melancholy which discolours my own imagination, and can only jaundice yours too, if that is not too much the case already — a circumstance it distresses me to believe, but too possible from what I saw, and yet more from what I know of the natural effects of your changed habits of life — deprived of that free air and wholesome labour, the portion of your early, thoughtless days. You say man was made to mourn. I again say we were made to work, to laugh and sing, to be happy ourselves and make others so, as far as is in our power ; and when it will not do in one way, we should try to strike out another in which it will succeed better. For this I write you, for this I cultivate your acquaintance, while I almost fly every other, and could I only say to myself that reading this half-sheet would lift as great a weight from your breast as writing it suspends for the moment from my own, it would inspire a flow beyond the prescription of the wise King Solomon himself for the time, and much more permanent for what is to follow than that receipt of his which you must understand better than I, but from which I doubt one can draw but a very temporary relief, and that, too cruelly plundered by all the blue devils

before we have well ascertained its possession. Yet I am no fair judge, since among other aversions that haunt me just now is a strong one for the bottle, and I had much rather have recourse to the poor houlet [owl] for a companion than to the liveliest *bon vivant* ever inspired by Burgundy or Champagne. Yet, dr. Burns, there never was that settled sadness in my soul that could stand against that consuming fire beaming from the bright eye of one I knew or believed to be my friend, and felt to be a friend that soul clung to from choice in her mirthful as well as in her melancholy mood, and met no saturnine reproach to make her ashamed of the follies incident to either, but a kind, unaweing, inviting fraternity, that at once soothed and encouraged those social affections which seemed *in articulo mortis* till revived by this cherishing, benevolent warmth from a kindred spirit. By the by, I should not have forgiven myself had I ended without recalling to your remembrance a conversation where I supported an argument against your much superior delicacy of mind in a way that I doubt must sink your friend in your eyes in the same ratio it raised you in those of most of the hearers, where you shone greatly at my expense, and that too drawn from the stock where a woman can, I think, least spare the costs that contribute to her opponent's triumph. The question was of conjugal affection as affecting marriage settlements. I express something revolting to the female heart in a man's reducing a woman's provision to prevent her making a second marriage; at which you seemed greatly surprized and apparently shocked. This silenced me, but without altering my sentiments, which still are that starting such an idea is inimical to every feeling that affection dictates; that no one wishes to be bound down by an imposed obligation to

the spontaneous duties of kindness they wish to perform with unrestrained freedom, independent of controul, and outrunning even request. One does not brook a doubt of their inclining to perform, the most kind, the most respectable and the most steady part which they feel at the moment their own hearts would naturally prompt, without its being laid down by some one else and enforced by some little mean pecuniary reward or punishment, tending to lessen and degrade the mother in the eyes of those children to whom it is become material she should be rendered more august than ever, since she is to stand to them for all or nothing as a parent, and now an only one. It likewise lessens her to herself to find doubts where it has been her crown of glory to fix confidence and esteem, and though she might be flattered by the desire to live for ever, unrivalled in her heart, there is nothing to please in the precaution that, without preventing the internal, only fines one for the external change they make, not by the disposal of the heart, but the pledging the hand. I own, too, I should believe any man, when he propounded the reduction of a few pounds, meant, like the Mosaic Law against theft, to enact a fourfold restitution of what he set very little value upon. I am sure these are natural ideas, uninfluenced by interest; for I felt them rise in my own mind on reading a contract where there was a clause of that sort, although I, the moment it was in my power, renounced the whole sum from which the deduction was taken, and at that moment resolved never to pocket one farthing from the estate whose owner thus mistook the heart that throbbed but for him. Do you recollect a speech in Glover's *Leonidas*⁴ "Till life preferred by my inglorious colleague left no choice but what in me were infamy to shun, not virtue to accept."

This may not strike you as put to the purpose, but does me. However, apropos to citations, they are only the privilege of a feminine character, which wants strength to suggest its own expression, and not allowable to that manly originality of soul whose feelings blaze with tenfold fire in their own inimitable energy of words. 'T is yours, my friend, to lend but never to borrow the feeble colouring of another's thought ; to be cited, but never to cite. 'T is like the king begging from the beggar to save his own hoarded, useless superfluity. But I think more just now of your health than of all your writing, or even of the talents that first inspired them ; and when I see you ill, I forget the poet to regret the friend, the father, the man and the husband — every one of which demands your care for the sake of those to whom each is inestimable. Have you still a horse ? If so, ride him frequently ; if you have not a little garden, get one, not for the convenience, but for the amusement and the wholesome labour it would afford. Manual exertions and the smell of the red earth are sovereign specifics in complaints like yours, especially in the spring of the year and the morning of the day, and if saucy pride, which often, like a busybody thrusts in between us and our duties as well as our pleasures, should remonstrate that it was below a British Bard to plant cabbages like an old German Elector,⁵ sure the culture of roses, hyacinths, pinks and daisies is perfectly suited for him whose fancy shall all the while be twisting their sweets into a poetic garland, or moralizing over the rise or decay of every bud and bloom to which he is giving birth. But a man had better plant potatoes than have his peace wrecked with relaxation and vapours for which he may in vain drain all the volumes of Galen and Hippocrates or the deceiving potions of their

successors. I asked you half a dozen times when you were here, but could never draw an answer; for, absent and present, you think on something else when I speak to you, and leave me at a loss to guess whether my question has been disagreeably impertinent or only unobserved. However, supposing only the last, I venture to put it once more — Should it be in Mr. C——'s power to slip you into a Supervisorship, and should it be in mine to urge his doing so, would it be agreeable to you that I made the trial, or would the increase of business and perhaps change of place prevent your wishing such a promotion to take place as rather burthensome to yourself or chargeable to your family? Don't be hurt by a query perhaps *sans consequence*, but answer it in sincerity of heart to a friend whose good wishes is probably all she can throw into the scale of your fortune, and who pleases herself in now and then gauging the depths and shallows of your ambition, and, as far as she can, diving into every cranny and creek of your temper, your desires and the modes by which you would chuse they should be promoted. Meantime let me recommend moderation in all things, whether pints or politics, since both may be beneficial to the constitution, and do harm to nothing. If you exceed in any thing, follow my example, and let it be in writing, not however pirating, for I honestly assure you one page of your manuscript gives me more pleasure than half a dozen of those sheets all the world share with me, although, had the last never appeared, I had probably never have felt the full relish of the first; fame is the most becoming garb a man can dress in to a woman's eye, were she a hundred, and mine are not yet so dim as to be undazzled with its shine. Send me Cowper and Zeluco. Above all, write with them, and tell how you are, and how

you found all at home, and if you broke my cup⁶ in carrying. I hope not, lest it should be ominous. Yet I flatter myself your friendship is not brittle, but may last with your life; for Mrs. Burns's sake and your own I hope so shall your love. Adieu.—Yours,

F. A. D.

(1) Probably Mrs. Dunlop, by making play, somehow or other, with this "extempore" of hers, had exacted a promise from Burns to lengthen his visit by a day.

(2) A reference to the cold bath in Mrs. Dunlop's letter of 16th March, *infra*, suggests that Burns, who did not deny "occasional hard drinking," was at this time suffering from the nervous complaint of his youth, which he was wont to treat by a plunge into a barrel of water at his bedside.

(3) Mrs. Henri's servants, returning to Britain after their mistress's death.

(4) An epic poem in blank verse and nine books, by Richard Glover (1712-85), merchant, poet, dramatist, politician.

(5) An allusion to the Jacobite jape that George the First, the Elector of Hanover, was a kind of bonnet laird in Germany, as it was expressed in the lyric "The Wee, Wee German Lairdie"—

Wha the deil hae we got for a king
But a wee, wee German lairdie?
An' when we gaed to bring him hame
He was delving in his kail-yairdie.

(6) Mrs. Dunlop gave Burns a cocoa-nut cup which was an heirloom in her family; it is afterwards referred to as the Wallace cup.

Burns no sooner reached home from Ayrshire than he was thrown into a flurry by an intimation that he was about to incur the censure of the Board of Excise on account of his political opinions. What he had done or said it is impossible to tell. He had certainly subscribed to the Edinburgh *Gazetteer*, the reform paper, the mere reading of which was enough, in the nervous state of the official mind, to cause him to be suspect now that the people were reading Paine, and the progress of events in France was exciting a sympathetic agitation in England and Scotland. It is commonly believed, moreover, that Burns did not wear the placeman's gag so carefully as he led Mrs. Dunlop to believe in his letter of the 6th. He wrote a moving appeal to Mr. Graham of Fintry, and afterwards declared that Graham saved him from dismissal. There is, however, in the records of the Excise no mention of even a reprimand being administered to the poet. Anyhow, the storm soon blew over. Burns's supervisor and friend was certain that only a slight hint of the Board's disapprobation was given him.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

Dec. 31, 1792.

DEAR MADAM,—A hurry of business, thrown in heaps by my absence, has until now prevented my returning my grateful acknowledgements to the good family of Dunlop, and you in particular, for that hospitable kindness which rendered the four days I spent under that genial roof four of the pleasantest I ever enjoyed. Alas, my dearest friend! how few and fleeting are those things we call pleasures!

On my road to Ayrshire, I spent a night with a friend whom I much valued — a man whose days promised to be many ; and on Saturday last we laid him in the dust !

Jan. 2, 1793.

I have just received yours of the 30th, and feel much for your situation. However, I heartily rejoice in your prospect of recovery from that vile jaundice. As to myself, I am better, though not quite free of my complaint. You must not think, as you seem to insinuate, that in my way of life I want exercise. Of that I have enough ; but occasional hard drinking is the devil to me. Against this I have again and again bent my resolution, and have greatly succeeded. Taverns I have totally abandoned ; it is the private parties in the family way, among the hard-drinking gentlemen of this country, that do me the mischief — but even this I have more than half given over.

Mr. Corbet can be of little service to me at present ; at least I should be shy of applying. I cannot possibly be settled as a supervisor for several years.¹ I must wait the rotation of the list, and there are twenty names before mine. I might indeed get a job of officiating, where a settled supervisor was ill or aged ; but that hauls me from my family, as I could not remove them on such an uncertainty. Besides, some envious, malicious devil has raised a little demur on my political principles, and I wish to let that matter settle before I offer myself too much in the eye of my supervisors. I have set, henceforth, a seal on my lips as to these unlucky politics ; but to you I must breathe my sentiments. In this, as in every thing else, I shall show the undisguised emotions of my soul. War I deprecate ; misery and ruin to thousands are in the blast that announces the destructive demon. But . . .

5th January 1793.

You see my hurried life, Madam : I can only command starts of time : however, I am glad of one thing ; since I finished the other sheet, the political blast that threatened my welfare is overblown. I have corresponded with Commissioner Graham, for the board had made me the subject of their animadversions ; and now I have the pleasure of informing you that all is set to rights in that quarter. Now as to these informers, may the devil be let loose to—but hold ! I was praying most fervently in my last sheet, and I must not so soon fall a-swear ing in this.

Alas ! how little do the wantonly or idly officious think what mischief they do by their malicious insinuations, indirect impertinence or thoughtless blabbings ! What a difference there is in intrinsic worth, candour, benevolence, generosity, kindness—in all the charities and all the virtues, between one class of human beings and another ! For instance, the amiable circle I so lately mixed with in the hospitable hall of Dunlop, their generous hearts—their uncontaminated, dignified minds—their informed and polished understandings—what a contrast when compared—if such comparing were not downright sacrilege—with the soul of the miscreant who can deliberately plot the destruction of an honest man that never offended him ; and with a grin of satisfaction see the unfortunate being, his faithful wife and prattling innocents, turned over to beggary and ruin !

Your cup, my dear Madam, arrived safe. I had two worthy fellows dining with me the other day, when I, with great formality, produced my whigmeleerie [fantastic] cup, and told them that it had been a family-piece among the descendants of Sir William Wallace. This roused such an

enthusiasm that they insisted on bumpering the punch round in it ; and, by and by, never did your great ancestor lay a *Suthron* more completely to rest than for a time did your cup my two friends.² Apropos, this is the season of wishing. May God bless you, my dear friend, and bless me, the humblest and sincerest of your friends, by granting you yet many returns of the season ! May all good things attend you and yours, wherever they are scattered over the earth !

R. B.

(1) Burns had of course at one time looked for more rapid promotion.

(2) Tradition identifies this carouse with an all-night sitting, in which the Rev. Mr. M'Morine, of Caerlaverock, surprised the poet on entering, in the forenoon, by appointment, to baptise little Elizabeth.

*Ad. Mr. ROBT BURNS, Excise Officer,
Port Division, Dumfries.*

DUNLOP, 16th March 1793.

DR. BURNS, — It seems to me like half a century since I wrot you last. Many a time since have I laid the paper before me for that purpose, and put it by again without once dipping the pen in ink ; which may be one instance added to many of the useless pride of prudent resolve, that noblest prop of man of which I have seen you, my friend, sometimes make boast, and sometimes too, I doubt, deceive yourself as well as me. The truth, however, is that reason telling me all our correspondences and even our friendships ought to be turned to mutual advantage and improvement, just as I was sealing the last letter I sent you, it came in my head how I should make the pleasure I always have in writing you a spur to that duty which often in vain calls on

me to write others. Now, says I to myself, I have seven letters to write which I am wholly ashamed to think I have omitted for an inexcusable tract of weeks past, and which may, for ought I know, hang on as many still more unheeded, in defiance of justice, humanity, gratitude, and every motive that ought to guide inclination and banish procrastination. But I here solemnly promise to myself I will not again lift the pen to Burns till at least five of those prior claims are satisfied, and this I made myself certain would send them all to post that week. Yet in this I find I counted still without mine host, and have taken, spite of even this irresistible impetus, more considerably than a week to each. Now, praise be thanked ! they are dispatched, and were I to record to you, my good friend, the business some of them contained, you would despise me for being capable of an hour's delay in doing what I ought to have thankfully embraced the very first possible moment for attempting, instead of preferring even the self-indulging hope of drawing a few lines more from you, in which too there were no few chances I might after all be disappointed, since your writing is but a very uncertain consequence of mine, and depends on something in a poet perhaps as indefinable as what you might possibly denominate caprice in a lady, and of which you may frequently, in the course of our now long acquaintance, have suspected my being in some degree susceptible, although it has never for one minute influenced the esteem which I have from the beginning had for your talents, and which years teach me more and more to transfer to your heart and understanding, to both which I give the preference to almost all my other acquaintances now in existence. Yet, don't imagine I mean to compliment you with absolute infallibility in either.

On the contrary, I, with the real candour of true friendship, will take all the freedom your kindness allows me, and venture to find fault in single instances with both. Those instances staring me in the face at this moment, I shall let them drop like blots from my pen, and think of them no more if I can help it. The one has vexed me, as I feared its hurting one in whose happiness my heart takes a strong and constant interest, and whose feelings I know could not stand being torn with the rack of sensibility, tortured by remorse for injuring those whom duty and affection equally prompted his protecting, even at the expense of holding a perpetual bridle upon his tongue, and even extending the restraint to his pen. 'T is not enough, my dr. Sir, never to write improperly but to one; that one cannot wish you as well as I do and encourage it. Believe me, I would rather in the present state of things forswear that intercourse which at present forms one of the most delightful pleasures of my life, and for the loss of which I know nothing that could promise an adequate compensation, than have the pain of reflecting that it was my allowing or leading the way to an impropriety of expression that misled a friend into an inadvertent error which they might never be able to set to rights. I trembled when I read in a letter from Adair the other day to one of my girls, "Do you hear anything lately of B——s? We have a vile report in town that he is dismissest for some political nonsense. I hope it is not true; it was talked to be in a letter that was stopt at the post office."¹ I ventured to assert this was a lie, as I trust it is, and shall ever remain; so a truce to the subject till better times. The other fault I found with you recoils upon myself. Methinks I hear you ask me with an air that made me feel as I had got a slap in the face, if you

must read all the few lines I had pointed out to your notice in poor Jenny's book. How did I upbraid my own conceited folly at that instant that had ever subjected one of mine to so haughty an imperious critic ! I never liked so little in my life as at that moment the man whom at all others I delighted to honour, whom I revered myself, and was pleased and proud to point out in every circumstance to the applause of those around me. I then felt for Mrs. Richmond [Jenny Little], for you, and for myself, and not one of the sensations were such as I would wish to cherish in remembrance. But I was unhappy at that time, and perhaps given to be captious for that reason alone ; if so, forgive it in pity of the cause which you will e'er long be acquainted with, and which still keeps me uneasie, though not in the degree it then did, since I have more hope of sharing in the happiness of the visit, should you make a summer excursion next month to this side of the country, or rather in May or June, as you used formerly to do, when I may perhaps be able to laugh over what is yet a too serious distress of which I am not at liberty to speak, although it employs all my thoughts. Yet you, instead of pitying, will envy me when I tell you I to-morrow expect to see here the divine Lesley Baillie and her father and sister Grace. As I really like her, I hope her smile will banish care. The Major [Andrew Dunlop] is gone to London to proffer his services as a soldier in any rank and without fee or reward, which I think poetically heroic. Did I ever tell you that your friend Adair was my cousin, and had it not been for you might have been still a nearer friend.² 'T is strange how things come about in this world, and what means Providence employs to forward or frustrate our fortunes or our wishes. I should once have thought it impos-

sible you should have been jostled in the way of mine. Yet so it has turned out in more instances than one, and all as far out of the reach of foresight as this, which I dare say you cannot even guess now when it is past. Why don't you send me the volume of Cowper? I expect daily two of yourself³ from Edr. But what I value more than all the products of the press is one manuscript sheet from the author to, Dr. Burns, your sincere friend and obliged humble sert.,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

How does the cold bath suit this weather? We are in snow here. Adieu.

(1) A mere echo of the alarm which Burns felt in December, and which was so soon dissipated.

(2) The suggestion obviously is that Adair might have married one of the Misses Dunlop had Burns not introduced him to Charlotte Hamilton at Harvieston.

(3) The second Edinburgh edition, in two volumes.

The following fragment is all that remains of the letter to which Mrs. Dunlop refers in that which follows. It has a certain importance in so far as it fixes to a month or so the date, hitherto unknown, of the composition of the Cardoness epitaph and the epigram on Miss Davies.

*Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
Dunlop House, Stewarton.*

[*June, 1793.*]

I sent you a great while ago, a parcel of books, which I hope came safe to hand; and that they found my much respected friend in health and spirits, and have afforded her some entertainment. I have been doing little in my

rhyming trade of a long while.¹ The following is an epigram which I made the other day on a stupid, money-loving dunderpate of a Galloway laird — Maxwell of Cardoness :—²

Bless Jes—s Ch——, O Cardoness,
With grateful, lifted eyes ;
Who taught, that not the soul alone,
But body too shall rise.

For had he said, the soul alone
From death I will deliver :
Alas, alas, O Cardoness !
Then hadst thou lain forever !

Here follows another —

Extempore, on being asked why God had made Miss Davies³ so little, and Mrs. S—— so big. Miss D——, you must know, is positively the least creature ever I saw, to be at the same time unexceptionably, and indeed uncommonly, handsome and beautiful ; and besides has the felicity to be a peculiar favorite toast of mine. On the contrary, Mrs. S—— is a huge, bony, masculine cow-pie, horse-godmother, he-termagant of a six-feet figure, who might have been bride to Og, king of Bashan ; or Goliah of Gath.

EPIGRAM

Ask why God made the GEM so small,
And why so huge the Granite ?
Because, God meant mankind should set
That higher value on it.

Though I think this last a pretty enough thought, yet I have been lately outdone by an humble acquaintance of mine, who is reckoned a very clever fellow among his fellow-tanners ; for that is his trade. I do not remember to have heard any thing of a good while that has pleased me so much.

EPIGRAM

Silence in love shows deeper woe
Than words tho' e'er so witty :
A beggar that is dumb, you know,
Deserves the greater pity.

I shall be too late for the post. Adieu !

R. B.

(1) He was nevertheless working regularly for Thomson's publication, and corresponding with the editor.

(2) David Maxwell of Cardoness, the subject also of an epigram, and mentioned in the second Heron election ballad, was made a baronet in 1804, and died in 1825.

(3) Deborah Davies, a petite Englishwoman, friend of the Riddels of Glenriddel; the subject also of "Lovely Davies" and "The bonie wee thing." Allan Cunningham declared that the other lady was an Hon. Mrs. Stewart.

*Ad. Mr. ROBERT BURNS, Excise Officer,
Port Division, Dumfries.*

DUNLOP, 25th June 1793.

MY DR. BURNS,—How little do we know ourselves ! I am sure I would not have believed had it been written in the Gospel of truth itself that I should have been so long without your having the trouble of paying for one letter from me, and that I should be now actually more than a week of acknowledging the receipt of your last, which furnished me with the sweet conviction that you were really wishing to hear from me, and had been looking back with half a kind of regret to the unusual length of my silence, for the first part of which I shall not now try to account further

than just to assure you it was not confined to yourself, but extended to every one of my friends, and was what I really could not help. It would give me more pleasure than I know how to express if I could persuade myself that you had felt the twentieth part of the chagrine at it that I did. Nay, however ungenerous you may think the confession, I must do the justice to truth to declare I should be the more happy the more I could flatter myself that you had for once felt uneasie on my account, since I am fully conscious I had no intention to trifle with the sacred name of friendship which you have encouraged me to assume, and which I would not resign for any title the Royal George has to bestow, since not the well-won renown of my ancestors has ever ministered more faithfully to my pride, or added more to my consequence in my own eyes, than the distinction with which you have honoured me, and to which I am not weak enough to fancy I have any other right than my estimating them at their whole value. You say you had sent me books ; they are not yet arrived, nor do I know where I should enquire for them. Be so good as tell me by what conveyance I ought to have had them, and what they were. I should be vexed to lose any thing that ever had been yours, and that was a proof of your remembrance of one whose existence is lightened under every cross accident of life by the satisfaction of reading your works and believing she possesses a place in your esteem. Indeed, there are moments when it seems almost my only remaining consolation, notwithstanding all the advantages and blessings which you, my friend, as well as myself and the world see heaped up around me. But alas ! how oft does my ungrateful soul exclaim in bitterness of spirit "*Nulle rose sans épingle.*" Yet I have surely found one in the rose of Mossiel that has

never yet scratched me, although my chosen bouquet for now six years — a long probation for the best of our race, and much too long for any flower but the Moss rose of the West, or the beauteous evergreen that decked the fair head of Coila, to bloom with unfading freshness and please still more than at the beginning. By the by, all here is just now in blooming beauty. I wish you were here to behold, sing and add to the charms of the place those of brilliant wit and unexhaustible fancy. Yet I retract, for to me at this moment your company would be the torture of Tantalus, for I have not heard a syllable this five or six days. But, my dr. Burns, I have all the poetic joy of imagination. I look daily for my son John and his wife and Mr. and Mrs. Vans and their eldest daughter. Perhaps their presence may dispel my deafness. Should it not, I have your new edition,¹ in which let me thank you a thousand times for the erasure of a word. A dash of your pen over *unhappy*, made at my request, is a compliment that made my heart bound with exultation, while another proof of friendly attention excited at once my gratitude and tears. Alas ! the sweet little bud is perhaps e'er now forever blasted and shrouded in earth with my poor Susan, far from his father and his native soil. Why does this accursed and accursing war keep me a stranger to his fate who, I much fear, already may live only in your lays? But let me share my joys with you, the kind friend who shared and soothed my sorrows. I have lately had an enjoyment too exquisite for concealment — a letter from my dear Anthony, who is doing equal to my wishes, and beyond my hopes. He is kindness and generosity personified. Were I to write a poem, he should be my hero. I ought to bless my Creator on my bended knees every day for having brought me into the world to be

the mother of this boy. Don't you, who are a father, feel that this is the true language of the heart? I am sure you do, or you could never be a poet. Yet I think you are sometimes, my friend, mistaken, or pretend to be so. I am reading the letters of Voltaire and the Great Frederic, which you call fulsome flattery, whereas I think I read the hearts of both, the keen fire of the soul, the enthusiasm of youth, the ardor of unbridled passion and unresisted sway. With what cruelty does the Prince mix his kindness, and with what tender affection and a degree of nobleness does the old man overlook and forgive it, though the wound bleeds inwardly till his last breath. No book ever gave me such a lesson of the bearing and forbearing necessary between friends while they inhabit this lower world, where even friendship, our purest, our most celestial delight, even in those enviable, admirable characters, can be converted into vanity and vexation of spirit. What then must such poor mortals as we two look for from one another. But pardon me, thou last of the Bards, who, exalted on the lofty Snowdon, shone forth a guiding light to the people, if I have dared to class myself with thee. Love, we are told, levels all mankind. Ought not friendship, his sister, to share his privileges, and permit me to aspire to a fellowship with him whom I dare not in the sincerity of my heart praise, since he has told me the flow of nature and fervent approbation is fulsome in his ears, whose constant lot it has been to draw it from every unbiased mind and feeling heart? I have been reading Dugald Stewart's book² too, three volumes of a description of the Alps and glaciers of Savoy, and sewing a bed-mantle, not the winding-sheet of Laertes, but for a marriage present to one who ought not to marry, but one I pray Heaven to bless in every wish and

every action of life. I have been visiting your flame, the divine Miss L. Baillie, who is said to have lighted the expiring lamp of life, if not of love, in the heart of a young officer lately come sick from India. He appears a very clever lad, and is a son of John Fowler, whom you must have heard of. We had much talk of you: here I still am, and shall for some time remain. I hope to see you again, but whether or not can never, I hope, be removed to a place or state where I will not remember you with admiration, esteem and sincere friendship.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

I expect John Moore's Journal³ to-morrow. Have you read it?

(1) The second Edinburgh edition of the poems was ready on 18th February 1793. In this edition "great, unhappy Wallace heart" in "The Cotter's Saturday Night," was replaced by "Wallace's undaunted heart," and the verses "On the Birth of a Posthumous Child" (Mrs. Henri's) were inserted.

(2) Perhaps a book lent by Dugald Stewart. No work of the kind mentioned is known to have been written by him.

(3) *Journal during a Residence in France.* By [Dr.] John Moore, 2 vols., 1793.

Burns was busy all this year composing and furnishing up songs for George Thomson's *Scottish Airs*. War had broken out in February between Great Britain and France, with the result that at once political feeling was exacerbated and trade was depressed. Burns's heart was true to the Republic,

and the slackness of trade which Pitt's policy brought about touched his pocket. When he wrote the song inclosed in the following fragment, he told Thomson on 25th June he felt his "bosom ready to burst with indignation on reading or seeing how these mighty villains divide kingdom against kingdom, desolate provinces, and lay nations waste, out of the wantonness of ambition, or often from still more ignoble passions."

*Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
Dunlop House, Stewarton.*

I mentioned to you a grand publication of Scots songs, going on just now at London,¹ where I have the honor (indeed it is all I have by it) of revising and composing the Scots songs. The following are verses I intend for the sweet plaintive air, "Logan-water."

A SONG.²

Tune — "Logan Water."

O Logan, sweetly didst thou glide,
The day I was my Willie's bride ;
And years sinsyne hae o'er us run, since
Like Logan to the simmer sun —
But now thy flowery banks appear
Like drumlie Winter, dark and drear, dirty
While my dear lad maun face his faes, must
Far, far frae me and Logan braes.

Again the merry month o' May
Has made our hills and vallies gay ;
The birds rejoice in leafy bowers,
The bees hum round the breathing flowers :
Blythe, Morning lifts his rosy eye,
And Evening's tears are tears o' joy :
My soul, delightless, a' surveys,
While Willie's far frae Logan braes.

Within yon milkwhite hawthorn bush,
Amang her nestlings sits the thrush ;
Her faithfu' Mate to share her toil,
Or wi' his song her cares beguile :
But I, wi' my sweet nurslings here,
Nae Mate to help, nae Mate to cheer,
Pass widowed nights and joyless days,
While Willie's far frae Logan braes.

O wae upon you, Men of State,
That Brethren rouse in deadly hate !
As ye make mony a fond heart mourn,
Saē may it on your heads return !
Ye mind na, 'mid your cruel joys,
The widow's tears, the orphan's cries :
But soon may Peace bring happy days
And Willie hame to Logan braes.

I have lately written two, or three ballads for the fore-mentioned Collection, which I will send you some other opportunity. Adieu.

R. BURNS.

(1) Thomson's *Scottish Airs* was "printed and sold by Preston and Sons, at their wholesale warehouses, No. 97 Strand, for the proprietor."

(2) This song was sent to Thomson in a letter of 25th June 1795, and was published in Thomson's third volume, 1801.

*Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Officer of Excise,
Port Division, Dumfries.*

DUNLOP, 6th August.

(The month in which you used to write
oftenest; let it still be my harvest.)

DR. BURNS,— It is a charming morning, just six o'clock, and I have parted with friends who had passed a week here. I don't use the word as it is commonly applied to people you hardly know, but to a lady whose grandfather

was the intimate companion of my grandfather, whose family has been in habits of mutual intercourse with mine ever since, who spent her infancy and youth in part under my eye, and who now brought her son and two daughters to cement the friendships of the young folks of the fifth generation, without, as far as I know, a moment's interval of dryness or offence on either side. Were you not the very arch-poet of the age, I do not think you would have imagination to suggest the pleasure I had in this visit, notwithstanding how very deaf I still continue to be. Yet the looks of satisfaction I saw in every face around me, and the approbation I felt so justly due to the children of a mother for whom my esteem and affection had always kept equal pace through the whole journey of life, gave a satisfaction which I have not words to express, but in which I please myself with believing she sincerely shared; for she has the enviable happiness of seeing with a mother's exultation of heart the universally acknowledged merit of dutiful, beautiful, and singularly accomplished children, who seem to love her with a friendly as well as filial affection. I, instead of returning to the house, went up the waterside to prolong by silent reflection the scene which I had just lost, and which was made still more touching from particular circumstances, one of which was that the young man had been the confidant and friend of poor Mrs. Henri, the chosen witness of her marriage, and so much struck with the subsequent events as never since to have ventured into a place where he had the probability of meeting me, so that this, like most pleasures I have ever enjoyed, had its full tint of melancholy. While they were here I heard of the dr. little infant, and beyond my hopes he was well—intelligence, I believe, wholly owing to his grandfather's

being gone to Switzerland, whence letters are allowed to pass, but hardly from France. What a melancholy thing is it to think what a succession of guilt and misery has been attendant on the emancipation of that unhappy country! We are commanded to pray for our enemies, and I am sure I sincerely pray they were converted into our friends, and not alone for private interest, but for that of my country and of suffering humanity. Mr. and Mrs. Vans and their daughter and John and his wife are gone east, but the first party I expect to return this day, accompanied with a sister of Mr. Vans's and her daughter. Yet on what accidents do our satisfactions depend! No one of the whole happen to have a voice suited to my ear, and except that I am sometimes able to distinguish a word from Vans himself, I might as well be at London for all the rest; so that instead of joy I feel their visit cruelly tantalizing. They are to be in your side of the world, and I am to give them a letter of introduction to you. Yet I can hardly guess on what score this is asked, whether as a compliment to me, a piece of curiosity to see the learned pig, or vanity to *know*, at least be able to *speak of* what so many really admire; for I must warn you beforehand that not one of the party cares a snuff for that dr. feature, *to use your own expression*, in your character which first recommended you to a descendant of Sir W—— W——, and without which all the rest would in a great measure want, as the Royal George says, the *fion* (*Fr.* = finishing touch) at least in my eyes, nor can I believe any one blind to the beauty of that charming varnish can value as they ought those *chefs d'ouvrés* of their Maker's, on whom he has been pleased to bestow his last and highest polish. Yet Vans is a worthy man, and the ladies do not want where-

withal to speak ; so that should you be in the way, I don't believe you would grudge the time you spent with them. Their stay in Scotland at present will not be long, nor can I say if they will do more than visit it in summer for some time ; still I rather think not. Not a word yet of the books you sent, although I have made numberless inquiries. I sent on purpose your song to the Lovely Lesley, whom you may also happen to see again one of these days, as I am sure she will much regret it should she miss you on her return, since, as she wrot me, a sight of the Bard was the first and greatest happiness she expected to draw from her journey. In her you meet a true admirer, which I assure you she also does in me ; but alas ! my admiration signifys little to either a beauty or a poet. Yet I should be unconsolable if either she or you thought so, and permitted me to guess at an opinion so humiliating and vexatious for one who sets more value on your esteem, and would be more pleased with an opportunity of promoting your happiness than I can tell, or than perhaps either the one or the other would take my word for it I could. She has found a friend in England. I wish you had his fellow at Dumfries. He franks her letters, and allows me to put mine for her under his cover. Now were he with you, I should only put him to half duty, for paying for yours is the only time I am sensible of the worth of money, by the joy it is able to procure me. But I truly grudge that you should be obliged to buy mine, since I dare not hope you find them such a pennyworth. Yet they are a very scarce commodity, if that can increase the price. The only letter I have wrote since my last to you has been to your fair favourite, to whom, if you can remember an old woman in the company of so engaging a young one, I beg you may

make kind mention of, Dr. Burns, your gratefully obliged friend and humble ser., FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

*Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
Dunlop House, Stewarton.*

*August 25th, 1793.
[Franked by P. Miller.¹]*

I have got a Frank for you, my dear Madam, but I have unfortunately miscalculated the time. The post goes in ten minutes, so, to fill up my paper to the decent length of a letter, in such a moment of time, I shall write you a song which I composed the other day. It is to an old air called "Allan Water," a river in Perthshire.

SONG²

By Allan-side I chanc'd to rove,
While Phebus sank beyond Benledi; A high mountain
The winds were whispering thro' the grove, to the west of
The yellow corn was waving ready: Strathallan.
I listen'd to a lover's sang,
And thought on youthfu' pleasures mony,
And ay the wild-wood echoes rang,
O dearly do I lo'e thee, Annie.

O happy be the woodbine bower,
Nae nightly bogle make it eerie;
Nor ever sorrow stain the hour,
The place and time I met my Dearie!
Her head upon my throbbing breast,
She, sinking, said—"I'm thine for ever!"
While mony a kiss the seal imprest,
The sacred vow, we ne'er should sever.

The haunt o' Spring's the primrose brae,
The Simmer joys the flocks to follow;
How cheary, thro' her short'ning day,
Is Autumn in her weeds o' yellow:

But can they melt the glowing heart,
 Or chain the soul in speechless pleasure,
 Or thro' each nerve the rapture dart,
 Like meeting HER, our bosom's treasure.

Are you, Madam, acquainted with any of the principal people concerned in this new Royal Bank³ about to be established in Glasgow? I am sure the Major will know them all. Alas, too well do I know the up-hill business of asking a favor! But an uncommonly clever worthy young fellow, an intimate friend of mine, would wish a Clerk's place in it; and if you could any way serve him in that view, I would *indeed* esteem it as a high personal favour. His name is, John Drummond; a native of Crieff: was bred four years a Clerk in a Banking-house (I forget its name) in Stirling; and has been now two years in the same capacity in a branch of the Paisley Bank here in Dumfries. That branch is giving up, which is the reason of his being out of employ; and in these accursed times, employ is not easily found. The Cashier of the Paisley Union bank can give his character. Indeed, Recommendation in the strongest terms, he can have from all his former Employers; and *Pecuniary* security he can furnish to *any amount*. Permit me to tax your most strenuous efforts.

Adieu!

ROBT. BURNS.

(1) Captain Patrick Miller, son of Burns's landlord at Ellisland, and now M. P. for the Dumfries Burghs.

(2) Published in Thomson's second volume. In the *Centenary* edition, by the way, Burns's marginal note to Benledi is curiously misquoted thus: — “A mountain to the north of Stirling”; and the poet is

censured for his faulty geography. What Burns wrote on the margin of the MS. was, as we have quoted, "A high mountain to the west of Strathallan"; and on the showing of the editors of the *Centenary* themselves, that is good geography.

(3) The attempt to establish a Royal Bank in Glasgow in August 1793 failed.

*Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Officer of Excise,
Port Division, Dumfries.*

GLASGOW, 10th Sept. 1793.

I had, my dr. Sir, yours on Monday last, on which day I also had your books, but not in the box as they were sent; so I know not if any writing but the flattering, kind address on the blank leaf accompanied this welcome tribute of your much-valued friendship. Just then Mr. and Mrs. Vans were bidding me farewell, perhaps for the last time, as they are not to be in Scotland again for probably two years, and two years is a long, long while when one reaches my age, and, what is far worse, the *nota benes* that my spectacles, hearing-trumpet, gray hairs, etc., etc., etc., convey of the rapid devastation attendant on their course. But no help for all this; what cannot be cured must be endured; and I will not trouble my friend with unavailing complaint. Let me rather thank that interesting intercourse which, like the evening breeze, fans the falling leaf while it yet quivers in the blast, and gives an active animation to its withering existence. Yes, dr. Burns, when I hear from Mr. Moore or you, I cannot express the feeling with which I read your letters, and tell my heart you are my friends and believe me yours; that this belief gives you pleasure, and you honour with your regard her who forgets

that world by which she has long been forgotten. Imagination, in a transport of gratitude, kisses those hands which, softly inclining the hour-glass, make my last ebbing sands of life run smooth, and half baffle the shocks of sickness, sorrow, deafness, and disappointment, to which my nature is peculiarly suited to become a daily prey. Yet I hope I am truly sensible and grateful for the estimable blessings that still crown my days. Vans's visit has afforded me substantial delight. The foibles of his character are wore out, and its good qualities matured; his affairs comfortably settled, and his children educated with a plainness and simplicity that charms me the more perhaps the less I had laid my account with its being conducted in so moderate a channel, whereas I feared an overflowing tide of foreign follies and magnificent ideas would have borne away the remembrance of what the domestic happiness of a large family in poor Scotland requires. But this, like many of the occurrences of this world, shews me I have not the second sight, and ought to acquiesce when some things cross my hopes, since what is so material has so far exceeded them. That family will pass Dumfries in about a fortnight hence, when, if you should meet them, you will see in him more good-natured dispositions and a more generous heart than falls to the share of one man in a thousand. As for his wife and daughter, I will not commend them because they are my own, and because all the world do it for me, wherever they have wandered over its surface, as well as the friends at home, by whom they are universally beloved. I left home for a few days, where their absence made too great a blank, and have been trying here to forget those remembrances of former farewells which the present too forcibly recalls, so that I have not

yet even looked into Cowper. Your two little volumes [the Edinburgh (1793) Edition] I receive with the joy of beloved and familiar friends, and rejoice in hearing their reception from others. Mr. Moore writes me thus:— “What is become of Burns? He is the first poet in our island. There is an infinity of genius in his ‘Tam o’ Shanter,’ but I wish he would write English, that the whole nation might admire him as I do.” But why am I so long in answering your letter, which gave me at once pain and pleasure? There is no man by whom I would like better to be rated above my value, but I dare not even for that prize deceive you. When you deign to ask a favour, I consider it as a mark of friendship that makes my heart dance, and feel reluctance in sinking your opinion of my consequence by telling you how very insignificant it is, not only in interest but even in point of information. I know not even who are the people principally concerned in this bank, nor can Andrew, who takes no part in it, tell me. At any rate, I know no men on earth with whom my word would weigh one grain in favours of a preference in the line of business you mention; else I had already attempted it for a person in whom I have a very particular concern, which I may hereafter explain to you, and which will convince you I can do nothing but mourn in secret my want of that influence which might benefit any thing you wished well to. Yet I could not rest quiet without making some effort, however weak, for your friend. I racked my brain to think how or where I should apply, and the only way could occur to my mind I have taken by writing to David Dale,¹ not that I believe “the wished-for end will not be denied,” but only conscious that “while the busy means are plyed,” they bring their own reward in the

pleasure I experience when I attempt any thing agreeable to one I so sincerely esteem, and by whose regard I feel myself at once honoured and pleased in the highest degree. In doing this I fear I have only sacrificed a forlorn hope, that will fall to the ground without advantage, nor have I a second string to my bow, tho' this first is a very spider web. I can only say had it been the cable of a first-rate man-of-war, I would have tugged at it with all my force in your service. Yet so very small is my hope of success that I am glad you spoke not for yourself on this occasion; otherwise I should have been inconsolable under the refusal that I apprehend must await me; for indeed I have no right to look for any thing else unless, like the House of Commons of England, Mr. Dale should throw out my petition without a reading, nor even then would I have much room to remonstrate or accuse him of injustice. With Mr. Corbet I would fain persuade myself I may one day or other have more to say on a subject yet nearer my heart, but in which I wait your leave to move, in case I should contrive to do it mal-apropos, and hurt where I most desire to be of use, since you formerly suggested a hazard I should never have dreamt of, but which I trust is now at an end. Meantime I endeavour to keep up my credit there as well as I can against the hour of cause, when, should I be able to be of use to justice and my country, by the promotion of one of her worthiest sons, I shall not regret seeing my sixty-fourth year, although obliged to carry my eyes in my pocket, and wear my ears hung at my belt, in which mortifying circumstances I still long for your seeing me, but yet more for my seeing you a Supervisor, or any thing that could make you more happy and at ease than you are, and that could be an agreeable remembrance of me when I could no longer

plague you with my letters — a time I 'm afraid not very distant, for even without my being removed to Heaven or to London I doubt my hand will soon lose its cunning, since already I write nobody but yourself, and that with a difficulty of which the reading possibly has often apprized you, the whiteness of the paper creating a giddiness in my head that often puts it out of my power to end the sentence I had begun, and throws confusion into my ideas as well as their expression. Have you any thoughts of being in our part of the world this season? Shall I ever again have it in my power to converse with freedom, and speak of things that hang heavie at my heart, and weigh it down too deep for utterance? My sole company is a book, and I have found one at present which I reckon a treasure. Why are not you Retif-de-la-Briton and me the Marchioness M.? How I envy her in spite of all her misfortunes, while I beguile the hours in reading the *Nuits de Paris*, and join Voltaire, Mercier, and the King of Prussia that he is the only original author in France. I think I know two in England (as our country is injuriously called) who lead me, like his *Elise*, to think an author is something superiour to the race of man. How happy then must I feel myself in being able to number both these Scotsmen and friends of, Dr. Sir, yours sincerely,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

Since writing the above I have been inquiring here, and am assured the bank is yet a very uncertain scheme, and will not at any rate be arranged sooner than a twelvemonth hence, when, like all polititians, they pretend they will dispose of the offices impartially to the best qualified upon an uninfluenced examination. I said this was all I could ask, only hoping that, Mr. Drummond being first on the list,

ceteris paribus, should in justice claim a preference should a hundred candidates afterwards appear, which they alledged would be the case. Meanwhile he should miss nothing good for any appearances I dare flatter myself with here, where I would hardly be surprised were the whole affair to vanish into smoke. At all events, I fear our interest is at best a poetic vision ; at least if you don't know some far better support than any help I can afford. I send this to Mr. Kerr, and once more am now and ever, Dr. Sir, your much obliged and ever grateful humble sert.

Address for me at home, where I shall be in a few days.

(1) One of the best known names in the history of Glasgow. He was a yarn merchant ; introduced cotton-spinning into Lanark and other places, and was concerned in many commercial and philanthropic schemes. He became a Congregationalist and a preacher.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

DUMFRIES, 15th Dec. 1793.¹

MY DEAR FRIEND,—As I am in a complete Decemberish humour, gloomy, sullen, stupid, as even the deity of Dulness could wish, I shall not drawl out a heavy letter with a number of heavier apologies for my late silence. Only one I shall mention, because I know you will sympathize in it ; these four months, a sweet little girl,² my youngest child has been so ill that every day, a week or less threatened to terminate her existence. There had much need be many pleasures attached to the state of husband and father, for God knows they have many peculiar cares. I cannot describe the anxious, sleepless hour these ties have frequently given me. I see a train of helpless little folks ; me and my exertions all their stay ; and on what a brittle thread does

the life of man hang ! If I am nipt off at the command of fate, even in all the vigour of manhood as I am — such things happen every day — gracious God ! what would become of my little flock ! 'T is here that I envy your people of fortune. A father on his deathbed, taking an everlasting farewell of his children, has indeed woe enough ; but the man of competent fortune leaves his sons and daughters independency and friends ; while I — but I shall run distracted if I think any longer on the subject !

To leave off talking of the matter so gravely, I shall sing with the old Scots ballad : —

O that I had ne'er been married,
I would never had nae care ;
Now, I've gotten a wife and weans,
And they cry "crowdie" evermair :
Crowdie ance, crowdie twice,
Crowdie three times in a day ;
An' ye crowdie ony mair
Ye 'll crowdie a' my meal away.

December 24th.

We have had a brilliant theatre here, this season ; only, as all other business has, it experiences a stagnation of trade from the epidemical complaint of the country — *want of cash*. I mention our theatre merely to lug in an occasional "Address" which I wrote for the benefit night of one of the actresses, which is as follows :

ADDRESS

SPOKEN BY MISS FONTENELLE ON HER BENEFIT NIGHT, WEDNESDAY,
DECEMBER 4TH, 1793, AT THE THEATRE, DUMFRIES

Still anxious to secure your partial favor,
And not less anxious sure this night than ever,
A Prologue, Epilogue, or some such matter,
'T would vamp my bill, said I, if nothing better ;

So, sought a Poet, roosted near the skies,
Told him, I came to feast my curious eyes ;
Said, nothing like his works were ever printed ;
And, last, my prologue-business slily hinted.
“ Ma’am, let me tell you,” quoth my man of rhymes,
“ I know your bent — these are no laughing times :
Can you — but Miss, I own I have my fears,
Dissolve in pause and sentimental tears —
With laden sighs and solemn-rounded sentence ;
Rouse from his sluggish slumbers, fell Repentance ;
Paint Vengeance as he takes his horrid stand,
Waving on high the desolating brand,
Calling the storms to bear him o’er a guilty land ! ”

I could no more — askance the creature eyeing,
D’ye think, said I, this face was made for crying ?
I ’ll laugh, that’s poz — nay more, the world shall know it ;
And so, your servant, gloomy Master Poet !
Firm as my creed, Sirs, ’t is my fix’d belief,
That Misery’s another name for Grief :
I also think — so may I be a bride !
That so much laughter, so much life enjoy’d.
Thou man of crazy care and ceaseless sigh,
Still under bleak misfortune’s blasting eye ;
Doom’d to that sorest task of man alive —
To make two guineas do the work of five :
Laugh in Misfortune’s face — the beldam witch !
Say, you ’ll be merry, tho’ you can’t be rich.
Thou other man of care, the wretch in love,
Who long with jiltish arts and airs hast strove ;
Who, as the boughs all temptingly project,
Measur’st in desperate thought — a rope — thy neck —
Or, where the beetling cliff o’erhangs the deep,
Peerest to meditate the healing leap :
Wouldst thou be cur’d, thou silly, moping elf,
Laugh at her follies, — laugh e’en at thyself :
Learn to despise those frowns now so terrific,
And love a kinder — that’s your grand specific.

To sum up all, be merry, I advise ;
And as we’re merry, may we still be wise.

25th, Christmas morning.

This, my much loved friend, is a morning of wishes : accept mine — so Heaven hear me as they are sincere ! that blessings may attend your steps, and affliction know you not ! In the charming words of my favourite author, *The Man of Feeling*, “ May the great spirit bear up the weight of thy gray hairs ; and blunt the arrow that brings them rest ! ”

Now that I talk of authors, how do you like Cowper ? Is not the *Task* a glorious poem ? The religion of the *Task*, bating a few scraps of Calvinistic divinity, is the religion of God and Nature ; the religion that exalts, that ennobles man. Were you not to send me your *Zeluco* in return for mine ? Tell me how you like my marks and notes through the book. I would not give a farthing for a book, unless I were at liberty to blot it with my criticisms.

I have lately collected, for a friend’s perusal, all my letters ;³ I mean those which I first sketched, in a rough draught, and afterwards wrote out fair. On looking over some old musty papers, which from time to time, I had parcelled by, as trash that were scarce worth preserving, and which yet at the same time I did not care to destroy ; I discovered many of these rude sketches, and have written, and am writing them out, in a bound MS. for my friend’s library. As I wrote always to you the rhapsody of the moment, I cannot find a single scroll to you except one, about the commencement of our acquaintance. If there were any possible conveyance, I would send you a perusal of my book.

R. B.

(1) Published by Currie, 1800, with the misdate 1795.

(2) Elizabeth Riddell Burns; see p. 226.

(3) This was the Glenriddel MS., containing a number of unpublished poetical pieces, which Burns took so great pains to recover after the death of Captain Riddel, for whom the book was compiled.

A letter of Mrs. Dunlop's is apparently missing here.

*Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Officer of Excise,
Port Division, Dumfries.*

DUNLOP, 14th Feby. 1794.

Why, my good friend, have I not heard from you in reply to my last, or rather since? I had much rather it had been so. Why have I not seen you as I wished and hoped I should have done on the melting of the snows? Do you determine to treat me with rigid justice, and repay in kind my seemingly careless, long silence. If so, be still more just, and recollect the many, perhaps sometimes persecuting instances you have had of my indefatigable, persevering assiduity in writing when I could hardly expect your stretching patience the length of travelling over the whole epistle without now and then making a most tremendous leap in the weary journey. Yet your good-nature, politeness, or some still better cause, has always prevented your acknowledging any hardships to which you found the length of the way had exposed you; nor have you ever once indulged the vanity of a boast while exercising uncomplaining fortitude, to which our brave campaigners in Flanders are not able to attain, and for which I could not resist the pleasure of praising you with sincere delight would you only allow me to do it to your face; but for this you must, if you incline it, really catch time by the forelock, for I

shall in a fortnight hence be gone to Edr. on my way to Morham, where Mrs. Dunlop is again ready to obey the first command given our first parents. I would not have gone to her at this bout but from a fall she has lately got, and the effects of which she still feels, I am rather more anxious about her than on former similar occasions, and unable to refuse her reiterated earnest requests to encourage her by my presence in the hour of trial. Fain would I augur from your silence that you mean to favour us with an annual look of the *Bard*, and, of what I value still more, if you can pardon one's thinking anything preferable in value, *the Friend*, a title I am proud of your permitting me to give you, and happy in believing your sentiments with regard to myself may fairly claim as your due. Yet I would have liked that you had, just if it had but been in a single line, said you kindly proposed what you knew would make me so happy, or not overlooked with supercilious neglect as not worth an answer the offer which, however trifling in its produce, I meant as a kind one, of dedicating my work for a certain time to the benefit of my little godson, and in which I in pure earnest solicited your assistance. In return for my part in this proposal I had humbly presumed to hope you would have *brought* me a reading of that manuscript you were preparing to deck the library of some more deserving, more favoured, much envyed, but I am sure not more sincere friend than myself, when you would have taken the trouble of carrying a New-Year's gift I have kept by me since the first of Janry. for your little boy, from not knowing, as I mentioned before, how to send it safe, or liking to venture the loss of any thing meant for a child, lest his mother should have any of the superstition from which hardly any of our sex are free, where our favourite

objects are concerned, and which ordinarily accompanies that sensibility of heart which, for your sake and the good of your family, as well as her own happiness, I wish your wife to possess, and in which the luster of her eyes does not allow me to believe her deficient. These were my thoughts. Can you disappoint the hopes and wishes of your friends, if it is in your power without very great inconvenience to do otherwise? I persuade myself you cannot. Don't force me to abjure this faith. I shall do it with too painful reluctance, more than I trust your humanity will dispose you to inflict. I have for your perusal Moore's *Journal*, where you will find a quotation from your "Tam o' Shanter" and that approbation the Dr. uniformly bestows upon the author. As it is a dear book, I presume you have not bought it. If you come here, I have a thousand things to ask and to tell. If you do not, I shall feel a suspicious fear that my questions may be but importunate, and my communications uninteresting, notwithstanding the numberless kindnesses that start up to my grateful remembrance to check such a thought and reproach me for such an expression as from you would have cut me to the heart. But you men are of stouter stuff. Besides, you know it is not in earnest, as when I assure you of that admiration, esteem, and real friendly regard with which I ever am sincerely yours, and in which I can bear no doubt. Adieu.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

Dr. Burns, write whenever you get this if you would oblige me, were it but yes or no, as the song says, if it must be so.

The early part of this year was clouded for Burns by a return of his old complaint, hypochondria. He

was comparatively idle so far as composition was concerned, and as will be seen, Mrs. Dunlop found him equally lazy at correspondence. When he did answer her letters he took no notice of her reproaches and remonstrances, and it is possible that the extravagant length of some of her recent effusions had brought about the result she had long professed to dread—he did not read her letters carefully, if at all.

*Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
Dunlop House, Stewarton.*

Mar. 13th, 1794.

Readdressed to Moreham, near Haddington.

I would have written you, my dear Friend, immediately on receipt of yours, but from day to day I had a prospect of going to Ayrshire, when I would have had the very great pleasure of meeting you ; but to-day I learn that all hopes of my west-country jaunt are cut off. This has mortified me extremely, as now I shall not have it in my power to see you God knows when. I shall indeed be in Ayrshire in summer, but then it is odds but you will be in the East-country.

Pray, were not your son, James, and your grandson, Wallace, along with Cornwallis at Seringapatam? I am just reading an exceedingly well written narrative of that campaign, done by a Major Dirom,¹ who was Adjutant-General there, and who has bought an estate and is now settling in this neighbourhood. The Major frequently mentions a Lieut. Wallace, whom I take to be your grandchild ; and Lieutenant Agnew, who may possibly be a relation of yours. They, two, were aidecamps to Colnl. Maxwell. I have often wished to have sat by you, and have read the narrative to you. The circumstance of little Wallace being

there, so near a relation of yours, and one in whom I know you are so much interested, made me all alive to the story. It was an admirable school for a young soldier.

How do you like the following verses, which I wrote the other day on a fantastical, fine-fashioned Dame of my acquaintance?

MONODY ON MARIA²

How cold is that breast now which Folly once fired,
 How pale is that face where the rouge lately glistened!
 How mute is that tongue which the echoes oft tired,
 How dull is that ear which to Flattery so listened!

Loves, Graces and Virtues, I call not on you;
 So shy, grave and distant, ye shed not a tear:
 But come, all ye offspring of Folly so true,
 And flowers let us cull for Maria's cold bier.

We'll search through the garden for each silly flower,
 We'll search through the forest for each idle weed;
 But chiefly the nettle, so typical, shower,
 For none e'er approached her but rue'd the rash deed.

THE EPITAPH

Here lies, now a prey to insulting neglect,
 Who once was a butterfly gay in life's beam;
 Want only of Wisdom denied her respect,
 Want only of goodness denied her esteem.

Voila un autre! In answer to one who affirmed of a well-known Character here, Dr. B——,³ that there was falsehood in his very looks —

That there is FALSEHOOD in his looks,
 I must and will deny;
 They say, their Master is a KNAVE—
 And sure they do not lie.

Yours ever,

R. BURNS.

(1) *A Narrative of the Campaign in India which terminated the War with Tippoo Sultan in 1792.* By Alexander Dirom, 1793. Wallace was Mrs. Dunlop's grandson, "Sandie"; he was aide-de-camp to his uncle, Colonel Maxwell, the Duchess of Gordon's brother. See *antea*, p. 192. Agnew may have been a relative of Mrs. Dunlop on the mother's side.

(2) The somewhat mysterious orgie at Woodley Park and the consequent breach with the Riddells, which gave occasion for this lampoon on Mrs. Walter, occurred in the early part of this year. This copy of the piece lacks verses 2 and 5.

(3) Dr. Babington, of whom nothing is known.

Ad. Mr. ROBERT BURNS, Dumfries.

[Franked by Kerr: Edinr., Twenty-second March, 1794.]

I seize this opportunity of getting Mr. Kerr to frank this line. I got yours on coming to Morhame, and give you a thousand thanks for writing. Your remembrance is always a cordial to my wounded spirit, and I thankfully rejoice at sight of your hand, although you never answer one word I say to you. Indeed, I am still of opinion you do not read my letters. No matter, if you recollect me kindly without them; 'tis perhaps all I ought to expect, and more than I can pretend to deserve, unless you are the most grateful of mankind, and allow people a claim for that esteem or admiration they cannot help giving you. Indeed, as far as that goes, I have a most extensive and constantly encreasing right, of which I cherish a hope after a seven years' trial that you will now never think of defrauding me. Every line I receive I consider as a promissory note, empowering me to draw deeper on your friendship, and should you

never read mine, believe me I avenge the neglect by reading yours twenty times before I lay them by, and a hundred times after. They are my business when idle, my consolation when distress or disappointed, and my companion when alone. But I am resolved you shall not throw this aside, for it shall positively contain something good to tempt your attention, if either prose or verse can command it. I call the Muses to my aid when the varied events of life unfit me for other society, and to their secretary I naturally commit the property with which at these moments they are pleased to entrust me. If its value is small that is not my fault, and he that is faithful in small matters may be depended upon in greater. I have been at Edr., where I have produced the following, the real effusions of the heart, on the double marriage of four of my friends. The one couple is my eldest daughter,¹ who, after three years' deliberation, gives her hand to one of the worthiest of men without a sixpence, and instantly leaves me, probably for ever, to go to London. This affair I have often hinted at before in writing you, and you must have seen how it wrings my soul between hopes and fears for their future situation. I am incredibly sorry I have not seen you just now, but will be much more so should you come to Ayrshire when I am away. But I pray you don't do that if you can help it. I shall endeavour to get back as soon as I can; yet I fear it may be midsummer at least before I make it out. Although I have oft entreated you in vain to come, may I not for once prevail on you to let it alone for a month or two till I get home again. I am sure you will not between now and that time meet one friend to whom your presence will give equall not to say superiour pleasure. You have no curiosity; you don't even ask to whom I lent your love song, although I told you it had been

a successful declaration. I send you my tract for education for the benefit of little Frank, and the epithalamium above mentioned on the other side, and ever am, sincerely yours,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

When Cupid with a double torch
 Thus lights my friends to joy,
Shall pangs ungratefull rend my heart
 With timid black annoy?

No, let me with a silent sigh
 Waft on their promised bliss,
Nor stain with one unhallow'd tear
 The kind connubial kiss.

Let sordid selfish narrow thoughts
 Withdraw their poison'd sting,
In concert with their mutual joy
 My widow'd heart shall sing.

MORHAME, 21st March 1794.

(1) Agnes Eleanor. Her husband was Joseph Elias Perochon, a London merchant. See *antea*, vol. i. p. xxxii.

*Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Officer of Excise,
Port Division, Dumfries.*

MORHAME, 12th May 1794.

DR. BURNS,—First when I knew you, or rather first when I wrot you before I knew you but in the poet's page, I had no occupation but writing you, and a most blessed one that was; for to it I believe I have been indebted for any little attention I have since been enabled to pay to the duties, the pleasures, or the business of life allotted to fill up that term of it between me and the grave—a void I am not now so very anxious as I then was to overleap. Time, with all its troubles, seems not so tedious, nor the world, with all its drawbacks, half so insipid as it then did, tho' God knows I

can hardly enumerate the circumstances that have since occurred to endear existence much more to me, but could be at no loss to register a multitude of teasing vexatious ones that might have helped to put one out of conceit with themselves or those about them, in which number I shall for the present only quote your obstinate and unkind silence, which, although I had in part deserved it by having myself played something like the same ungracious part formerly, yet I feel it so grievously cruel when coming from you that it swims a-top of every other distressing recollection, and gets to my pen the moment I come to complain or muse upon what seems a just cause of complaint, overclouding my spirits. Put, then, dr. Sir, an end to this, and I shall try to get over the other grievances fate may afflict me with as well as I can without any seditious murmurings or self-tormenting discontent. But, indeed, I cannot feel truly happy deprived of those testimonies of your kind remembrance with which you used so frequently to favour me, and upon which time only teaches me to set the more value the oftener I have occasion to compare with others, or to feel the blank their absence creates, since they have been withdrawn. Not all the attentions, not all the happiness or kindness of the family I am in, not the prattle of their five lovely infants, nor the seeming prosperity of all around me, tho' endeared by every proof they can bestow of regard and affection, can afford me that unmixed pleasure I used to taste under this roof when I had added to those the warm assurances of esteem and regard from a friend whom I believed incapable of flattery, and whose good-will I returned with too much sincerity myself to doubt of his. This is now the fifth¹ time I have wrote you since I have been able to draw one line in return. What have I done to deserve

this? The only offence I have been guilty of that I know is the neglect of sending *Zeluco*, but I waited to have it bound, and to know how to get it conveyed. Could I think you were as much in earnest to send me the letters you once spoke of, and which I am sure I need not say how much I would delight in reading, it would be a hope that would cheer my very soul to look forward to. But, instead of this, I now almost despair of ever getting another line from you, nor guess to what I should impute the change, whether to my own insipidity or the unsteadiness of you men, among whom I dare say there are very few indeed that can boast of acknowledging the same friends seven years, which is now about the period since you allowed me the pride of reckoning my own name in the list of those you called your friends. Nay, I can show under your hand an address to your very dr. and much respected friend Mrs. Dunlop, which I cannot bear to think should ever be obliterated from your memory. I assure you it is with me indelibly inscribed on the living table of a grateful heart. But, setting this aside, you ought at least to tell me if you had two letters from me here, and one from Edr., franked by Mr. Kerr, containing a present for Francis the first, and another with accounts of the birth of Francis Wallace the second, who is a fine little boy, but not yet a Christian. If you are still alive and serve the king at Dumfries, write me. If you do not, I shall believe you are left the place, and deserted your post as well as your friend, and shall wear the willow for your sake, and a weeping one I do assure you it will be. Write me when you mean to go to Ayrshire. I have no time yet fixt for leaving this unless my son Andrew gets a command of Light Horse,² which I understand is in agitation. Farewell.— Believe me ever sincerely yours,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

John and his wife offer compts., tho' you are no longer brother farmers.

(1) Three letters from Mrs. Dunlop, of dates between 21st March and 12th May, including the one in which she announced the birth of another Francis Wallace, presumably a child of Captain Dunlop's, are thus missing. Including it and the other missing one noted at p. 266, *antea*, Mrs. Dunlop had actually written five letters since Burns's of the 15th December.

(2) Major Dunlop did raise and command the Ayrshire Fencible Cavalry.

Mr. ROBERT BURNS, Excise Officer,
Port Division, Dumfries.

June 12th, DUNLOP 1794.

DR. BURNS,—Perhaps the intelligence is of little or no importance to you; yet it is pleasant to myself to acquaint you that I am once more in that land you once loved, and which gave birth to that fame which has blown you so far from us as perhaps to change the ideas of your mind farther than the spot of your residence. However, Ayrshire, should it be forgot by you, can never forget the honour you have done her in the world's eye, and in this respect I feel myself a member of my native county, and, independent of every future event, must with gratitude and pleasure remember the time when, spite of the heavy hand of misfortune pressing hard upon both my heart and consequence at the same moment, your Coila appeared drest in fancy's fairest flowers, and bid your friendship reach out a little finger to support me above the Slough of Dispond where I was ready to be sunk forever. The sweet perfume of her bouquet

revived me, while perhaps the splendor that surrounded the assistant genie dazzled my imagination, and added supernatural influence to his presence and her charms. My spirits were exhilarated as if I had been intoxicated with lavender drops or chewing opium, and almost lost sight of the mournful scenes of real life to soar up to that sublime creation which seems the suitable abode of superior intelligences. But alas ! my good friend, you, I dare say, as well as I know by woful experience that a trance does not last long. St. Paul was not long lifted up to the third Heaven when he must again descend to earth, return to all its overwhelming cares and sorrows, and so must I without your help, I dread, though with a feather you can for a time at least hold me above them all whenever you please. Fight alone the best I can with that mire in which fate or folly forever plunges me, and from which I never expect to be fully extricated but by the exterminating angel, yet let your goose quill only scratch a line saying you will visit your native soil, now that you know I once more inhabit it, and have only delayed coming because I was absent ; it would be good-nature if not truth, to tell me so, and would keep me in good humour, with myself and you for half a year to come, which you 'll allow is a great while for a woman to be pleased or a man to deserve she should. What merit, then, may I not boast who have been almost seven years delighted with the little obliging kindnesses the Bard has honoured me with, and most sincerely grateful for the indulgence with which he has over-looked many seeming inconsistencies in my conduct, which I would be at a loss to account for to any body, but which still, my own conscience bears witness, were never occasioned by one moment's interval of that esteem his works and their author are in my

opinion equally suited to inspire. True, you sometimes treat me with a degree of neglect which, though sensible I have deserved, I know not how to receive, and cannot resolve to return. However you may set me down in your own mind as the aggressor, I am wholly blameless, and now, as sincerely as ever, my Dr. Sir, yours, etc. etc.,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

CASTLE DOUGLAS, 25th June 1794.

Here in a solitary inn, in a solitary village, am I set by myself, to amuse my brooding fancy as I may. Solitary confinement, you know, is Howard's favorite idea of reclaiming sinners; so let me consider by what fatality it happens that I have so long been exceeding sinful as to neglect the correspondence of the most valued friend I have on earth. To tell you that I have been in poor health will not be excuse enough, though it is true. I am afraid that I am about to suffer for the follies of my youth. My medical friends threaten me with a flying gout; but I trust they are mistaken.

I am just going to trouble your critical patience with the first sketch of a stanza I have been framing as I paced along the road. The subject is LIBERTY. You know, my honored friend, how dear the theme is to me. I design it as an irregular Ode for General Washington's birthday. After having mentioned the degeneracy of other kingdoms, I come to Scotland thus :

Thee, Caledonia, thy wild heaths among,¹
Thee, famed for martial deed and sacred song,
To thee I turn with swimming eyes!
Where is that soul of freedom fled?
Immingled with the mighty dead
Beneath that hallowed turf where WALLACE lies!

Hear it not, WALLACE, in thy bed of death !
Ye babbling winds, in silence sweep !
Disturb not ye the hero's sleep,
Nor give the coward secret breath !
Is this the power in freedom's war
That wont to bid the battle rage ?

With the additions of —

Behold the eye which shot immortal hate
Crushing the despot's proudest bearing ;
That arm which, nerved with thundering fate,
Braved usurpation's boldest daring !
One quenched in darkness, like the sinking star,
And one the palsied arm of tottering, powerless age.

You will probably have another scrawl from me in a stage or two.

R. B.

(1) The "Ode to Liberty" or Ode for General Washington's Birthday is the complement of "A Vision," being the song of the minstrel of the latter poem. See the *Self-interpreting Edition* (Philadelphia, 1886).

MR. ROBT. BURNS, Officer of Excise,
Port Division, Dumfries.

DUNLOP, 8th Sept. 1794.

MY DR. BURNS,— I received some time ago, after many devious paths through which it had wandered on its way from Castle Douglas since the 25th of June, a little line so very diminutive in its size that I thought it must have come from Oberon the fairy, when, to my utter confusion, I found it was in the handwriting of my good friend who in a solitary inn, where, however, I hope for the sake of the poet every thing was not as scarce as paper, had set out on self-examination, confession of his sins, and appointed to him-

self the grievous penance of writing to me, although he had not certainly added as a compensation the duty of fourfold restitution. The smallness of the peace-offering, however, indicated a strong conviction that the sacrifice was offered up to a being of infinite mercy and long-suffering, and accordingly it was accepted as a sweet-smelling savour ; and I meant to have wrot you next day ; but seldom, indeed, I follow out my intentions, nor need I blush before you, who get a step beyond me in criminality, for you even overleap the bounds of your promise. Witness your flattering me even in that little line with the delusive prospect of hearing from you again in a stage or two. Alas ! what long stages you travel by. They exhaust all my patience, and make me fear I shall be laid down to rest with my fathers before you arrive at the next penitential inn, from whence you mean sending me another confession, perhaps with as little amendment as the last. Yet if it was penance, it could not be too short. Should your next afford you pleasure, as I hope it will, be sure I at least will never think it too long. Now I dare say you are angry, and think this a strange, ungrateful way of receiving the beautiful verses you sent me. Shall I, however, confess the exordium offended me ? I found something beneath you in the affected modesty of being afraid to tire *my* patience in reading any thing from *your* Muse, especially when I must believe you were conscious of more than common merit in the composition and enthusiastically fond of the theme. So was I once, but your goddess has behaved in such a way as to injure her reputation, and acquire so very bad a name, that I find it no longer fit to acknowledge my favour for her, since her company is not now profuse of bliss nor pregnant with delight ; and she is too much attached of late to the society of butchers¹ to be

admitted among ladies, or even named but by those who are greatly addicted to scandal and fond of directing its foul tongue against the fallen fair they have seen most honoured and esteemed, instead of letting her slip off unobserved and for a while forgotten till she can tye up her garter, bandage the ankle she had strained in a false step, or change her handkerchief spotted with the sanguine stains of the guillotine, and emerge from a temporary cloud in pristine glory. At present she is certainly raving in the crisis of a fever. May it not prove fatal, as I greatly fear it may to herself, as well as it already has to too many of her friends, to the shame and grief of all that remain. Now, as criticism is the feature in my character you seem to remember most — I love it more than ever for that very reason — I must indulge it, and as we generally by a critic mean only his false quarter or talent for finding fault, expect to hear every snake of envy hiss your irregular Ode, and without observing the inimitable force of description in the last line, dwell only on its not being rhyme with the one before it, which can only be accounted for by the place where it was wrote, which might so far derange the ideas as to make the author after dinner substitute the word *age* instead of *war*. Indeed, there is room to believe this was the case, as there is a confusion in the images of the preceding lines of that stanza, which seem to dance cross partners, while the thundering arm *braves* and the eye-shot *crushes* their opponents, whereas, had the poet wrot in the forenoon, or not in a public-house, he probably might have assigned their offices differently, and might have also remembered his kind intent of writing me again. Had he thrown such a sop to Cerberus, there would not have been one whit of all this barking against the harmony of Orpheus, the strength

of Hercules, and more than the beauties of Euridice. But let me drop poetry, and come to what I find a thousand times more interesting — your complaints, which, whether real or imaginary, I sincerely sympathise in ; perhaps, indeed, most in the last supposition, which I therefore hope is not the true one. You see, indeed, I have believed yours a real ailment, since I treat it with the same regimen as when you were once said to be ill of a fever at Mauchline, and I sent such another doze of nonsense, only wrote on a greater number of sheets, and I flatter myself you were then much the better of it. I am sure I was, for you took it in very kind part, and from that time treated me with a degree of friendly notice from which I have often derived more pleasure than I can well express or you believe. Yet I hope, notwithstanding the very great self-complacency with which I read it under your hand, that mine was your most valued correspondence. You have many better and more valuable friends, though I am sure not one that wishes you better, esteems you more, or rejoices more sincerely in believing you make me some sort of return, and feel an inclination to estimate me at least at as much as any one else will allow me to be worth. When will you convince me of this by coming to see us here? Do it while you can. God knows how short the time may be. This world whirls strangely round ; it may carry me with it. I thought long before now I should have been in London — a place from which my friends seldom return, and yet more seldom come the friends they went. Should you ever find this the case with me, only think I am like the rest of the world — a thing you are sure no body that knows a B from a Bull's foot will ever think of you. Even were you to whirl round from every friend you ever had on earth, and from me

among the rest, I could not believe it for a moment, since memory must ever turn back to those thousand unrivalled peculiarities I have so long been accustomed to admire. Nay, 't is not improbably to some of these peculiarities which distinguish my friend that I owe the partial kindness which I so much value ; for well I know your favour is not the silly wind that kisses all it meets, else I had never courted it as I have done, nor valued it as I trust I ever shall do. By the by, we had a story here that you had lost your office² and were gone to London. I should really have been very unhappy could I have believed for a moment there was a possibility of you shifting your quarters without telling me beforehand, but I never believe ill of those few it is my greatest happiness to love and esteem. What is become of your visit to Ayrshire ? Had you not spoke so positively of it, I don't know if I should have quitted the East so soon as I did, for I was in a family I greatly liked, and much more pleased than I commonly am from home ; but it was a great temptation to me to remove lest I should miss the pleasure of seeing you here — a thing I can so very seldom flatter myself with any chance for. Yet I hope the delay is not to amount to a total disappointment. Meantime, I beg to hear, not only how you are, but if your little girl is got strong, and how all the children are, and whether Mrs. Burns seems about to add to their number, and tell me as many particulars of them all as may play in my fancy while I sit tying knots, forgetting and forgot. Enable me to feast on the greatest of all delights, and may you too share the banquet, since the Muses cannot then absent themselves if we have the *pleasures of the imagination* to present them with. So I shall end with the grace and say — Lord bless us and our meat ! Amen. I saw

t' other day Miss Lesley Baillie, not well, but as fond of you as ever.

F. A. D.

(1) Like many Liberals, Mrs. Dunlop was by this time disgusted with the horrors of the French Revolution.

(2) Gossip, the origin of which cannot be traced. Burns was at this time working hard for Thomson, was assiduous in attention to his excise duties, and was not even corresponding with any London editor.

To MRS. DUNLOP.

Septr. 1794.

DEAR MADAM, — I am so poorly to-day as to be scarce able to hold my pen, and so deplorably stupid as to be totally unable to hold it to any purpose ; but as my good friend, THE MEMBER, franks it for me, it will only cost you the penance of reading. I know you are pretty deep read in Medical matters, but I fear you have nothing in the *Materia Medica* which can heal a diseased SPIRIT. I think that the Poet's old companion, Poverty, is to be my attendant to my grave. You know that my brother, poor fellow ! was on the brink of ruin, when my good fortune threw a little money among my hands which saved him for a while. Still his ruinous farm threatens to beggar him, and though, a bad debt of ten pounds excepted, he has every shilling I am worth in the world among his hands, I am nearly certain that I have done with it for ever. This loss, as to my individual self, I could hold it very light ; but my little flock would have been the better for a couple of hundred pounds : for *their* sakes, it wrings my heart !

A propos, the other day, Mrs. Burns presented me with my fourth son, whom I have christened, JAMES GLENCAIRN¹ ;

in grateful memory of my lamented Patron. I shall make all my children's names, altars of gratitude. Poor dear little souls, they are all, the finest creatures in the world. I gratefully thank my God for his goodness in that respect. A fine constitution, and amiable dispositions, are of immense consequence to the happiness of the individual.

When did you hear from the East? Believe me, I am most anxiously interested in every thing dear to you. Have you any correspondence with little Wallace; and does he promise well? I know that he used to occupy a good deal of your thoughts. Ah, my dear Madam, the feelings of a Parent are not to be described! I sympathised much, the other day, with a father, a man whom I respect highly. He is a Mr. Staig, the leading man in our Borough. A girl² of his, a lovely creature of sixteen, was given over by the Physician, who openly said that she had but few hours to live. A gentleman who also lives in town, and who had studied medicine in the first schools — the Dr. Maxwell³ whom Burke mentioned in the House of Commons about the affair of the daggers — he was at last called in; and his prescriptions, in a few hours altered her situation, and have now cured her. Maxwell is my most intimate friend, and one of the first characters I ever met with; but on account of his Politics is rather shunned by some high aristocrates, though his Family and Fortune entitle him to the first circles. I addressed the following epigram to him on the occasion:—

Maxwell, if merit here you crave,
That merit I deny:
You save fair Jessie from the grave!
An Angel could not die.

Here follows an Epigram of a different cast —

ON W—— R——, ESQ.⁴

So vile was poor Wat, such a miscreant slave,
That the worms even damn'd him when laid in his grave !
“ In his scull there is famine ! ” a starv'd reptile cries ;
“ And his heart it is poison ! ” another replies.

I shall write you some ballads in a day or two, the play-things of my fancy of late. Farewell ! ROBT. BURNS.

(1) James Glencairn, born 12th August 1794, died 18th November 1865.

(2) Miss Jessie Staig, daughter of Provost Staig, Dumfries, and subject also of the song “ Young Jessie.” She married Major William Miller, son of Mr. Miller of Dalswinton, Burns’s old landlord.

(3) Dr. Maxwell (1760-1834), son of a noted Jacobite, James Maxwell of Kirkconnell; educated in France, and was present as a National Guardsman at the execution of Louis XVI. The speech of Burke’s that is referred to was one delivered on 28th December 1792, in which he mentioned a gentleman who had ordered three thousand daggers at Birmingham.

(4) Walter Riddell of Woodley Park.

A letter of Mrs. Dunlop’s announcing her impending journey to London, on account of Mrs. Perochon’s illness, is missing.

Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
Dunlop House, Stewarton.

DEAR MADAM,— Your letter gives me great concern. At this rigorous season, and at your time of life, a journey to London is no trifling matter. Why did you not tell me which of the young ladies was ill? I regret extremely your

journey, and I regret still more the occasion of it. One thing is in your favor ; you will have the advice and friendly consolation of your and my very good Friend, Dr. Moore.

Something else that was in your letter, I do not know how to mention. You have effectively precluded my writing you, at the time when sitting down to take up my pen to you was of most consequence to me : in the desponding hour of oppressing care. My plaintive epistle, and the contents of your answer, give me, on my part, so much the air of mendicant insinuation, that I do not know how to lift up my head under it. I know not how to be the object of Pity. My enemies may dislike (for they dare not despise me) and I can repay them in kind ; but the Pity of a Friend is quite distressing. But more than enough on the subject.

I would without hesitation have crossed the country to wait on you, but for one circumstance. A week ago I gave my little James the smallpox, and he is just beginning to sicken. In the mean time I will comfort myself that you will take Dumfries in your way : I shall be mortally disappointed if you do not. Remember, it is by much your nearest route.

At this time you will be all life and gayety, with your Ayr-races. We have had the Caledonians [Militia] here for this bypast fortnight ; and of course, we have had a roar of Folly and Dissipation. Most of our fashionable young men have all that Profligacy and Outrage which have sometimes accompanied superior Understanding and brilliant Wit — but without those bright talents which might throw a kind of veil over mischievous Folly and unprincipled Wickedness.

One of the Corps provoked my ire the other day, which burst out as follows : —

TO THE HONBLE. MR. R. M—, OF P-NM-RE,¹ ON
HIS HIGH PHÆTON

Thou fool, in thy Phæton towering,
Art proud when that Phæton's prais'd?
'T is the pride of a Thief's exhibition
When higher his pillory's rais'd.

Here is another on a more agreeable subject : —

ON SEEING MRS. KEMBLE² PERFORM THE PART
OF *YARICO* IN DUMFRIES THEATRE

KEMBLE, thou cur'st my unbelief
Of Moses and his rod:
At Yarico's sweet notes of grief
The rock with *tears* had flow'd.

In the flattering hopes of seeing you, I remain, your
obliged friend,

R. BURNS.

Oct. 29th, 1794.

(1) The Hon. William Ramsay Maule, second son of the Earl of Dalhousie and proprietor of Panmure; afterwards Baron Panmure. He gave Mrs. Burns a pension of £50 a year in 1817, but her son James was able after a year and a half to relieve him of the obligation.

(2) Mrs. Stephen Kemble played in the opera of "Inkle and Yarico" by George Coleman in October of this year. Burns saw her on the 24th, and the epigram was the result.

It would appear from her letter of 12th January, *infra*, that Mrs. Dunlop answered this letter also.

DUMFRIES, 20th December 1794.

I have been prodigiously disappointed in this London journey of yours. In the first place, when your last to me

reached Dumfries, I was in the country and did not return until too late to answer your letter; in the next place, I thought you would certainly take this route; and now I know not what has become of you or whether this may reach you at all. God grant that it may find you and yours in prospering health and good spirits! Do let me hear from you the soonest possible.

As I hope to get a frank from my friend Captain Miller, I shall, every leisure hour, take up the pen and gossip away whatever comes first, prose or poesy, sermon or song. In the last article I have abounded of late. I have often mentioned to you a superb publication of Scottish songs which is making its appearance in your great metropolis, and where I have the honor to preside over the Scottish verse, as no less a personage than Peter Pinder does over the English.

December 29th.

Since I began this letter, I have been appointed to act in the capacity of supervisor here, and I assure you, what with the load of business, and what with that business being new to me, I could scarcely have commanded ten minutes to have spoken to you had you been in town, much less to have written you an epistle. This appointment is only temporary and during the illness of the present incumbent; but I look forward to an early period when I shall be appointed in full form: a consummation devoutly to be wished! My political sins seem to be forgiven me.

(1st January 1795.)

This is the season (New-year's day is now my date) of wishing; and mine are most fervently offered up for you! May life be to you a positive blessing while it lasts, for your own sake; and that it may yet be greatly prolonged, is my

wish for my own sake and for the sake of the rest of your friends ! What a transient business is life ! Very lately I was a boy ; but t'other day I was a young man ; and I already begin to feel the rigid fibre and stiffening joints of old age coming fast o'er my frame. With all my follies of youth and I fear, a few vices of manhood, still I congratulate myself on having had in early days religion strongly imprinted on my mind. I have nothing to say to any one as to which sect he belongs to or what creed he believes ; but I look on the man who is firmly persuaded of infinite wisdom and goodness superintending and directing every circumstance that can happen in his lot—I felicitate such a man as having a solid foundation for his mental enjoyment ; a firm prop and sure stay in the hour of difficulty, trouble and distress ; and a never-failing anchor of hope when he looks beyond the grave.

12th January 1795.

You will have seen our worthy and ingenius friend the Doctor [Dr. Moore] long ere this. I hope he is well, and beg to be remembered to him. I have just been reading over again, I dare say for the hundred and fiftieth time, his *View of Society and Manners* ; and still I read it with delight. His humour is perfectly original—it is neither the humour of Addison, nor Swift, nor Sterne, nor of any body but Dr. Moore. By the bye, you have deprived me of *Zeluco* : remember that, when you are disposed to rake up the sins of my neglect from among the ashes of my laziness.

He has paid me a pretty compliment by quoting me in his last publication.

R. B.

LONDON, 12th Janry. 1795.

DR. BURNS,— I write you from this Lethe of the world, you who seemed to forget me before I quitted the Land of

Cakes, that poor retreat of friendly remembrance, you who were so unkind as to leave unnoticed my last enquiries for your child, about whose fate you had awakened my most earnest anxieties by what you said of his then situation and those consequent feelings that prevented my being able to shake you by the hand and at least take a kind farewell, for I will not say, as a neighbour of mine used to do, "having the pleasure of bidding you adieu," since with you I can truly aver I have ever found it pleasure to meet and pain to part. Yet I would again beg your alleviating the pang by letting me hear at 410 miles distance how you and all yours are, and whether you ever recollect such a creature as I was once an inhabitant of the county to which your residence has, I hope, added as much renown as the Muses can bestow, whose charms, by the by, I think make full as deep an impression on our countrymen as on this side the Tweed, where interest and dissipation absorb every moment of time and every sensation of the heart, and where people do not put themselves to the trouble of ever calling in poetic fiction to represent a shadow of those attachments which relation or friendship claim, and which in Scotland have their claims most commonly allowed.

I have been now a month — I can hardly say in London for I am like you only a kind of borderer, being, I believe, a little beyond the liberties of the town, but not beyond the freedom of conversation, which I daily hear stretched far beyond those limits Scots decorum now allows. Indeed it is ordinary to send our Premier¹ to Coventry with as much ease and as little ceremony as you could do any other man who went half seas over every morning by the hour of breakfast amongst *sans-culottes*: nor does any one seem inclinable to lend the poor man an assisting arm in his stag-

gering state, which appears an unanswerable apology for all the stumbles he can make; and grievous ones he does make at almost every step. May heaven set them all to rights again, say I, for the sake of his friends and of his enemies.

I was with your friend the Doctor about a week. In our country he would be called a sad democrat, for we are the very pink of loyalty, and hate every word that fancy can connect with independence, which I believe will be the inspiring spirit of his intended publication now in the press, and pushing quickly into being. I have seen a few chapters, and believe it will be interesting, but more in the style of a Grumbletonian than I could have expected from a man who sees his own family raised to the very summit of his most presumptuous hopes by those powers which he seems so frequently and warmly to arraign. We had much discourse of you, and he bid me tell you he had wrot you a long and earnest letter on a subject he had much at heart, that he believed it had not come to hand by his having no return, but he had given it to one of the young surgeons you sent him, and wished you attending to the contents, since he was convinced you would find advantage from doing so; that if you would write *Seasons*, and paint rural scenes and rural maners, not as Thomson did, but as you would naturally do, he would undertake to dispose of the manuscript to advantage, as he was certain you would succeed; that he would advise your only giving the world one at once, and beginning with Spring, which he would, however, have you first revise with that coolness an author gains by laying aside his work a while before he reads it over again, or, if you pleased, showing it to some of those friends you trusted most, but who might be a little less partial than

yourself. I told him you were too fickle to be long partial to the same thing, that you always liked the last best, and after a while, I dare say, would judge as justly as anybody else. He asked if this peculiarity in your way of thinking was extended to your friends as well as your works. I told him I hoped not, and trusted on my return to Scotland I should be able to assure him as certainly of your steadiness as of his own, of which many people presume to promulgate strong doubts, and parties were divided in both the Sister Kingdoms. Indeed, I don't wonder tho' this cold, cold winter freeze many hearts, for never did I see or feel anything to match the inveteracy of this frosty, foggy atmosphere. Yet thank God ! I have found a warm, hospitable fireside in the small dwelling, the only place in London that I know with a spare room ; but here the master's house, like his wee purse, expands itself to accommodate no less than four of his friends at the same time — a thing wholly unknown to the rich or the great, and which, I fear, indicates an incapacity to reach those envied distinctions which tend in a great degree to contract the human soul and degrade the original workmanship of God as soon as it is gilded. Farewell ! you are a poet, so run little risque of this metamorphosis, worse than any of Ovid's. Write me to the care of Mr. Perochon, Parsonage Walk, Newington Butts, London.

(1) Pitt, whose power was really broken by the outbreak of hostilities in 1793, and was now at the nadir of his reputation, by reason of the blunders of the war, added to the reactionary legislation which had been forced upon him.

Here the correspondence suddenly breaks off. Although it is not absolutely certain, it is exceedingly probable that Burns received no more letters from Mrs. Dunlop after this of the 12th January 1795. From the fragment which we print next in order, and which was obviously written in midsummer of the same year, it is plain that between January and June no communication reached Burns from the lady. The pathetic reproach he addressed to her on the last day of January in the following year reveals the fact that he had sent her yet another budget in the interim, and although his words—"These many months you have been two packets in my debt" do not absolutely preclude the possibility of his having received one or more answers to other letters which he *may* have written between June and December, the chances are that we have everything before us in this volume that passed between the friends in 1795 except the whole of one and part of another letter of Burns's. The Lochryan MSS., then, confirm the belief that Mrs. Dunlop "deserted" Burns before he died; only the discovery of her letter of the 12th January 1795 reduces the period of the desertion from "about two years," as stated by Scott Douglas, to about eighteen months. The reason why Mrs. Dunlop did not give up this epistle for publication in 1800 is plain enough. It handled Dr. Moore pretty freely, and in 1800 Dr. Moore was still alive.

These MSS. throw no light whatever on the cause or causes of the breach. The correspondence of the poet

and his friend had pursued a normal course. Commenced with warmth, earnestness and industry on either side, it was carried on for a year or two with zest. Then it slackened — so early indeed as 1789 — one or the other would take a rest for a few months, Burns being the more frequent offender. Mrs. Dunlop was frequently reproachful, nay, angry at Burns's neglect; so much so as to send him a note written in the third person. She was perpetually wailing over the decadence of her correspondent's interest in her, and again apologising for her own laziness in letter-writing. Burns visited her at Dunlop at the end of 1792. Thereafter, from whatever reason, the correspondence languished more than ever, although in the occasional letters which they exchanged there was no falling away from the old cordiality. Up to the beginning of 1795 the lady seemed to be as anxious for a continuance of the correspondence and friendship and as confidential and amicable as she had been at any time. Then she went to London, and in January 1795 broke off the correspondence suddenly, and, as we have shown is probable, finally. The essential thing to be noted is that, although the interchange of somewhat fulsome compliments had long ceased to be an essential feature of the correspondence, there was really from first to last no absence of cordiality. In October 1794 Burns was lamenting that he had not been able to run across country to see his friend, and the last words of her last letter to him were "Write to me."

Although these MSS. have given up no fact bear-

ing on the subject of Mrs. Dunlop's "desertion" of Burns, an impartial reading of the complete correspondence now possible for the first time, favours the hypothesis that the explanation of her conduct is to be found in inadvertence, and not in a deliberate design to break off all connection with the poet on account of any moral or political offence he had given her. It is almost incredible indeed that if she was silent from carelessness alone, she could have resisted that pathetic appeal of the 31st of January. Yet surely it would have been equally hard for her to ignore that appeal if she had been offended with the poet, whatever the nature of the offence might have been. What cause of alienation could he have given? Certainly he did not offend Mrs. Dunlop personally, for there is no trace of apology in any of the letters he sent her after the breach. Could it have been either a moral or a political offence? There is no reason to believe that Burns's conduct as a man differed in the last eighteen months of his life from his conduct of the years immediately preceding, which was in the main perfectly familiar to Mrs. Dunlop. And as for politics, he had not been for years so free to liberate his soul as he was at this epoch; the "Tory frenzy" was past, and the Liberal candidate for the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright won the election in 1785 by the help of Burns's Heron Election Ballads, which the placeman poet was able to circulate without fear of the Board of Excise.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

[*Midsummer, 1795.*]THE DUMFRIES VOLUNTEERS — A BALLAD¹*Tune* — Push about the jorum.

Does haughty Gaul invasion threat,
Then let the louns beware, Sir, fellows
There's WOODEN WALLS upon our seas,
And VOLUNTEERS on shore, Sir :
The Nith shall run to Corsincon,²
And Criffell² sink in Solway,
E'er we permit a FOREIGN FOE
On British ground to rally.

O let us not, like snarling tykes, dogs
In wrangling be divided,
Till, slap ! come in an UNCO LOUN, strange fellow
And wi' a rung decide it ! cudgel
Be Britain still to Britain true,
Amang oursels united ;
For only but by British hands
Maun British wrangs be righted. must

The kettle o' the Kirk and State
Perhaps a clout may fail in 't,
But deil a FOREIGN tinkler-loun
Shall ever ca' a nail in 't: drive
Our FATHERS' BLUDE the kettle bought,
And wha wad dare to spoil it,
By Heavens the sacreligious dog
Shall fuel be to boil it !

The wretch that would a TYRANT own,
And the wretch, his true-sworn brother,
Who'd set the MOB above the THRONE,
May they be damn'd together !
Who will not sing, God save the KING,
Shall hang as high's the steeple ;
But while we sing, God save the KING
We'll ne'er forget THE PEOPLE.

I am afraid, Dear Madam, that this parcel will be a bad bargain, at the price it will cost you, ere it reach you. Miss Keith will see that I have omitted the four lines on the ci-devant Commodore which gave her so much offence. Had I known that he stood in no less connection than the Godfather of my lovely young Friend, I would have spared him for her sake.

I expected to have heard from you, how you arrived home and how you found your friends ; but in the hurry of momentous matters, I suppose such a trifling circumstance had escaped your recollection.— Adieu ! R. BURNS.

(1) These lines were published in *The Edinburgh Courant* of 4th May 1795, in *The Dumfries Journal* of the following day, and in *The Caledonian Mercury* of the 7th. They form No. 546 of the sixth volume of Johnson's *Museum*. Their *motif* was the raising in Dumfries of two companies of volunteers as part of the force for the defence of the country in the absence of the army, which was fighting France abroad. Burns was a member of the corps.

(2) Hills respectively at the source and near the mouth of the river Nith.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

DUMFRIES, 31st January 1796.

These many months you have been two packets in my debt — what sin of ignorance I have committed against so highly valued a friend I am utterly at a loss to guess. Alas ! Madam, ill can I afford, at this time, to be deprived of any of the small remnant of my pleasures. I have lately drunk deep of the cup of affliction. The autumn robbed me of my only daughter¹ and darling child, and

Madam

I have written you so often without rec
any answer that I would not trouble you again but of
the circumstances in which I am. - Injuries which have
long hung about me in all probability ^{will} speedily send me
beyond that bound whence no traveller returns. -
Your friendship with which for many years you honored
was a friendship dearest to my soul. - Your conversation
especially your correspondence were at one highly
entertaining & instructive. - With what pleasure
did I use to break up the seal! The remembrance
yet adds one pulse-beat to my poor faltering heart.

Farewell!!!

July
10. 1791

Robert Burns

THE LAST LETTER BURNS WROTE TO MRS. DUNLOP.

that at a distance too, and so rapidly, as to put it out of my power to pay the last duties to her. I had scarcely begun to recover from that shock, when I became myself the victim of a most severe rheumatic fever and long the die spun doubtful ; until after many weeks of a sick bed, it seems to have turned up life, and I am beginning to crawl across my room, and once indeed have been before my own door in the street.

When pleasure fascinates the mental sight,
Affliction purifies the visual ray,
Religion hails the drear, the untried, night,
And shuts, for ever shuts ! life's doubtful day.

R. B.

(1) Elizabeth Riddell, who, as already stated, died in September 1795.

Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,
Dunlop House, Stewarton.

MADAM,—I have written you so often without recg. any answer, that I would not trouble you again but for the circumstances in which I am. An illness which has long hung about me in all probability will speedily send me beyond that bourne whence no traveller returns. Your friendship with which for many years you honored me was a friendship dearest to my soul. Your conversation and especially your correspondence were at once highly entertaining and instructive. With what pleasure did I use to break up the seal ! The remembrance yet adds one pulse more to my poor palpitating heart ! — Farewell ! ! !

ROBERT BURNS.

10th July 1796.

This letter has hitherto been misdated the 12th. The "1796" is not in Burns's hand.

Appendix A

The following letter, which is of biographical interest, was found in the Lochryan collection:—

GILBERT BURNS to Mrs. DUNLOP.

MOSSGIEL, 2d April 1797.

MADAM,— If Dr. Curry's letter had come to my hand I should have concluded that every little consideration of oeconomy ought to give way that you might be gratifyed with a sight of it; but, I have never been honored with any communication either from Mr. Fergusson or Mr. Cunningham.

I am affraid you will scarcely be able to keep your temper with Mr. C. for this disappointment, and repeated instance of neglect, but as he is at present engaged in endeavouring to secure the honours of Glencairn to his father and himself, he is perhaps entitled to some excuse on that account. To trim the sacred tree of heraldry (the favorite of your dream), is an avocation so superior to the ordinary employments of life that attention to more vulgar dutys must be allowed to give way before it.

The manuscript book of letters is at Liverpool as an important part of the materials from which the future publication is to be selected, but as soon as it has served that purpose you may depend on getting it.

I found my brother's debts to exceed my calculation by 12 or 15 pounds. My own resources too had fallen so short that I had determined to borrow your present agree-

able to your kind offer. But Mrs. Burns needed money and was shy of applying to the Trustees on the funds, so I gave her your present determined to meet the Trustees in the midst of my deficiencys and my poverty. I comforted myself that however much these might lessen me in the opinion of the world, I had come honestly by them, and they ought not to lessen me in my own esteem. Still, however, with all the resolution I could muster I have scarcely ever been in a situation more uneasy to my feelings. Mr. Wallace had not had sufficient authority from the trustees for the message he sent me by Mr. Armour, viz. that they would pay whatever I could not conveniently advance. He had founded it merely on some expressions of Mr. Syme's, and *his* ideas seemed to go no farther than to accommodate me for a few months. I explained my situation fully and fairly to him and Dr. Maxwell, who both expressed their confidence that the other trustees would agree with them in taking such measures as would prevent my being distressed. Upon my consulting with my wife, however, after I came home, we concluded it would be wrong to risk so great a proportion of the property of my brother's family any longer in this farm which had uniformly disappointed our expectations hitherto.

I wrote Dr. Maxwell and Mr. Syme that I was thinking of this, and requesting that they would inform themselves if there was any farm not exceeding 100 acres of good land and in good condition in the vicinity of Dumfries that I might take at a fair rent. I inclose the answer I received from Mr. Syme. I have now finally taken my resolution of giving up this farm at all hazards, but as I have not yet explained myself on this subject to Mr. Alexander I do not tell it to the world. What may be my future destiny in life

I do not know. My wish is to get a lease of a small farm of good land capable of being ploughed with two horses. Failing this should be glad of a place as a steward or overseer on some gentleman's estate. If neither of these should occur I will endeavour with as much cheerfulness as possible to follow where the wise providence of Almighty God shall seem to lead, and will endeavour to perform the dutys of that situation in the best manner I can. I did not mention these difficultys to you in my last because I had not then taken my resolution, and I considered that I had no right to tax you with my distresses. I know your sympathetic mind: you have had your own portion of sorrows, why should you be burdened with mine when it is not necessary.

If ever, Madam, I have been so happy as by any little attention of mine to convince you of my will to have it in my power to oblige or serve you, I beg you will consider it, not as that undistinguishing homage which weak man but too frequently pays to mere rank and station in life; but, as the homage of the heart to a person who I really honour and esteem.

I hope to have the pleasure of being at Dunlop house toward the end of this month or the beginning of next, till when I remain, Madam, your most obt. hble. ser.,

GILBERT BURNS.

P. S. — However much I may think oeconomy and attention to small matters my duty at present, I beg you will not hesitate to write to me when you have any thing to communicate or want any information that I can give. I trust in God I shall never want threepence to pay the postage when Mrs. Dunlop shall honour me with a letter.

G. B.

Appendix B

The editors of the *Centenary* edition have utilised the Lochryan MSS. in their treatment of the “Passion’s Cry,” question (vol. ii. pp. 427–429), but it is necessary to subject their treatment to revision in the light of a more thorough examination of the documents. They commence with the following categorical statement:—“The earlier written part, beginning line 19, ‘I burn, I burn,’ etc., was produced in 1787, after hearing the end of a divorce case in which, on March 7th, the Court of Session decided that the husband might proceed against the lover without divorcing his wife,” and so on. This insertion is intended to be a flat contradiction of the editor of the Aldine edition of 1839, who published the lines as addressed to Clarinda. We shall see afterwards that it is as flatly contradicted in its turn by the Burns-Dunlop *Correspondence*. But in the first place we must inquire on what the statement is based. So far as can be discovered, the *Centenary* editors do not profess to have any other warrant than the following additional statement of their own (ii. 428):—“This earlier portion was sent from Edinburgh, to Mrs. Dunlop in an undated letter (Lochryan MSS.), in which Burns mentions that he has that day corrected the last proof-sheet of his poems.” Now, this is a singularly loose and inaccurate sentence. The only solid fact it contains is that Mrs. Dunlop received a letter from Burns in Edinburgh, in which he announced that he had that day corrected the last proof-sheet of his poems. We have examined that letter; it is printed at p. 21 of the first volume; it is not undated; it is a postscript, hitherto

missing, of the letter of 22nd March 1787, and is written on the first page of a sheet of post, the last page of which formed the envelope of the whole; and finally, it did not contain as an enclosure the "earlier written" portion of "Passion's Cry." The editors of the *Centenary* have guessed the date of the "undated" letter accurately enough. If Burns wrote, "I burn, I burn," after hearing the Maxwell-Campbell *crim. con.* case on 7th March 1787, he could have sent Mrs. Dunlop a copy in a letter written as he completed the proof of revision of the Edinburgh edition, which was published on the 21st of April. A simple inspection of the Lochryan MS. of the lines proves that it was not sent to Mrs. Dunlop till 1788. The MS. occurs on the third page of a sheet of post paper. On the first page is a holograph MS. of "On scaring some water-fowl on Loch-Turit," and on the fourth is a holograph MS. of "The Chevalier's Lament." Now, "The Chevalier's Lament" was, according to Burns's letter to Cleghorn of 31st March 1788, written on the 30th March of that year; therefore the poet could not have sent Mrs. Dunlop a sheet containing a copy of it in 1787. But the Lochryan MSS. enable us to fix within very narrow limits the date of her receipt of this sheet with its treble treasure. On a day towards the end of March 1788, Mrs. Dunlop wrote to Burns, "Remember you promised me your address to the wild ducks" (see vol. i. p. 81). On the 31st Burns replied, "The poems I promised you, I must confess debt and crave days." That indicates that he had promised her a copy of the verses "On scaring some water-fowl," and other poems. It is almost beyond a doubt that the four-page sheet before us is the fulfilment of that pledge. It was never directly acknowledged by the lady, but it is exceedingly probable

that she refers to it in her letter of Mid-June (vol. i. p. 100), in which she says : “ Coming down the hill, I took a letter of yours out of my pocket ; it enclosed a fragment of a poem you once sent me. You called it a sin-offering ; perhaps it should also have been a burnt-offering ; yet I should have regretted it had, for I confess I thought it an incense of a sweet-smelling savour.” There is no other poem of this period that could have been so spoken of ; when it is added that the “ Passion’s Cry ” lines in the Lochryan MS. are entitled “ A Fragment,” the proof seems complete that the MS. was sent to Mrs. Dunlop between the end of March and the beginning of June 1788. In regard to the date, it only requires to be added that the editors of the *Centenary* edition, in attempting to answer the question, at what period was “ Passion’s Cry ” sent to Clarinda ? fall into an extraordinary mistake. They say “ It was probably sent in 1787, about the same time as to Mrs. Dunlop.” It may have been sent to Clarinda simultaneously with Mrs. Dunlop in 1788, but it could scarcely have been sent to Mrs. Maclehose, much less addressed to her in 1787, seeing that the poet did not make her acquaintance till December of that year !

As to the origin of “ Passion’s Cry,” the Lochryan MSS. decidedly confirm the Aldine story that the earlier verses were addressed to Clarinda. Burns, as we have seen, told Mrs. Dunlop that they were a sin-offering, and she plainly took them as a more or less accurate record of experience. On 5th February 1789 he sent Mrs. Dunlop the improved version with the following explanation :—“ I believe I formerly mentioned some of the following verses to you, but I have since altered them with a view to interweave them in an epistle from an unfortunate lady whom

you knew" (see vol. i. p. 208). His letter of 24th July to Cunningham with the whole poem as we now know it, need not be quoted. Here we have evidence which is at least consistent with the theory that the verses were originally addressed to Clarinda — the editors of the *Centenary* deny that there is such evidence — and ample evidence, combined with the above demonstration as to dates, to disprove the theory that Mrs. Maxwell-Campbell was the original subject of "Passion's Cry." As to the *fons et origo* of the remarkable thesis we have commented upon, it is possible merely to conjecture that the editors of the *Centenary*, in examining the Lochryan MSS., found that the sheet containing "Passion's Cry" was enclosed (by accident of course) in the sheet which has been shown to be the postscript of a letter of 22nd March 1787.

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